



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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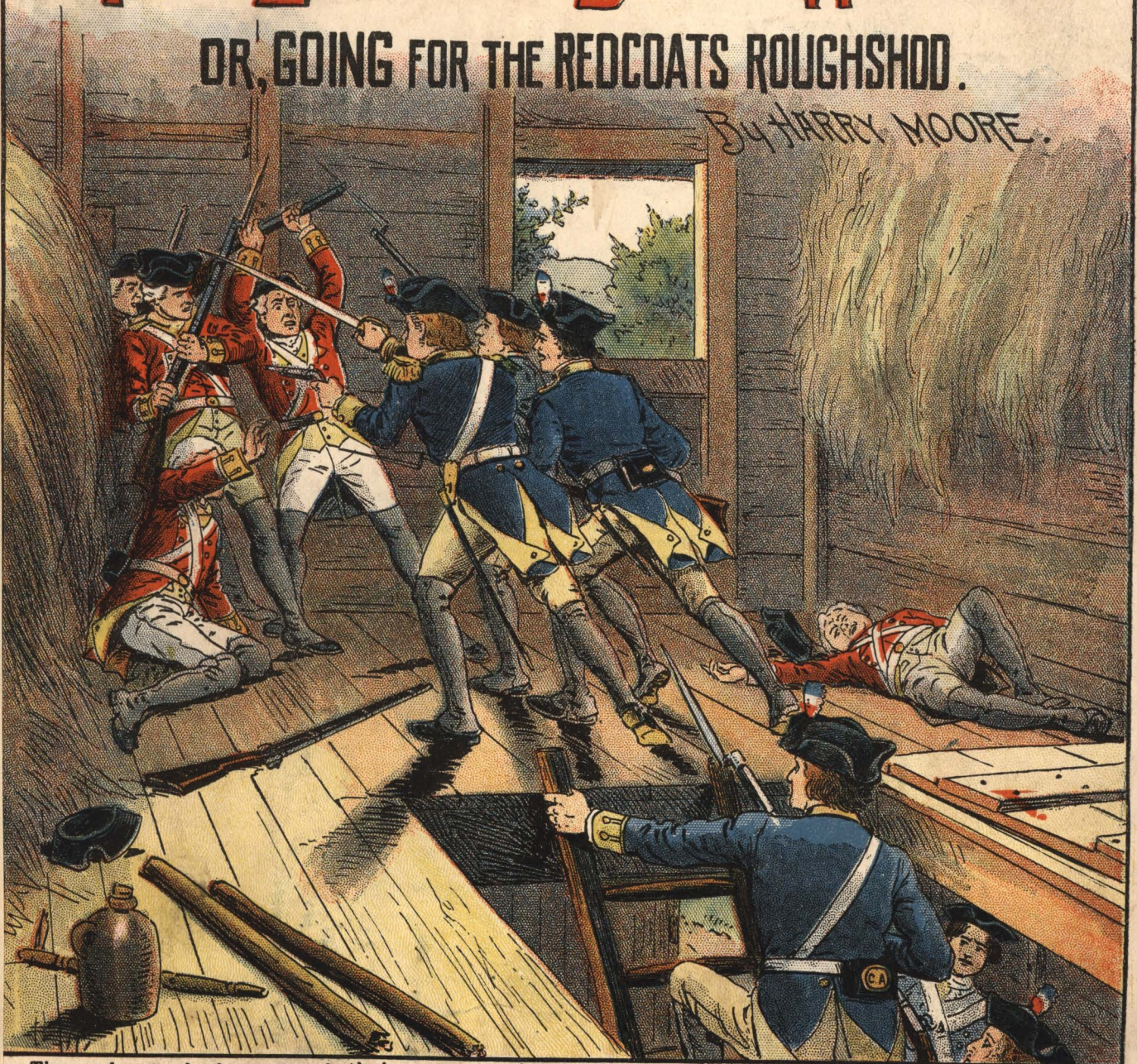
NEW YORK, APRIL 4, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' WRATH!

OR, GOING FOR THE REDCOATS ROUGHSHOD.

By HARRY MOORE.



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NEW YORK, APRIL 4, 1902.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BOY AND THE REDCOAT.

"Where are you going, boy?"

"To Camden, sir."

"To Camden, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why are you going there?"

"I am going after a doctor."

"Going after a doctor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who is sick?"

"My father, sir; and please do not stop me, for——"

"Who is your father? What is his name?"

"Samuel Morgan, sir, and——"

"Where does he live?"

"Two miles back on this road, sir; and please——"

"What ails your father?"

"I don't know; he is very sick, and I must hurry and get the doctor. Please let me——"

It was midsummer of the year 1780. On the main road leading southward into Camden, South Carolina, and about a mile north of the town, a British soldier and a handsome but roughly dressed youth of perhaps eighteen years stood facing each other.

The youth had come riding down the road at a gallop, and the redcoat who was a sentinel had leaped out in front of him and after forcing the youth to dismount had engaged him in conversation as above.

"How do I know your father is sick?" the redcoat interrupted. "I don't know him and I never saw you before."

"But I tell you he is sick!" the boy cried, a glint of anger appearing in his eyes. He is very sick, and if I do not get a doctor for him soon he may die."

"Humph! that's nothing to me," was the heartless reply.

The boy's eyes flashed. "I don't suppose it is anything you," he said; "but it is a great deal to me."

"I can't help that; I can't let you pass."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I had orders this morning to let no one pass."

This was a falsehood, but the redcoat was a cruel-hearted fellow and had taken it into his head to be mean on his own responsibility. He had decided not to let the boy pass. "What's his old father to me?" he said to himself. "He may die for all I care; the probabilities are that it will be one rebel less in this part of the country."

The boy looked the redcoat straight in the eyes. "You say you had orders to let no one pass?" he asked.

"That's what I said."

"I don't see why any such orders as that should be given you."

"There's lots of things you don't know."

"Well, I don't see any sense in such orders having been given. People must go to town and I don't see why you should wish to keep them from it."

"As I said before, sonny, there are lots of things you don't understand."

"Well, there is one thing I do know, and that is that I must go into Camden, and at once. Kindly let me pass."

The redcoat shook his head and laughed. "I couldn't think of it, sonny," he said. "Orders are orders, and I must obey them."

It happened that Tom Morgan was a bright young fellow, if he was but a farmer's boy, and somehow he got it into his head that the redcoat was not telling the truth. There was that in his air that made it so impress the youth.

"I don't believe you were given any such orders!" he said, in an angry voice.

The redcoat became very angry at once. "What is that?" he cried. "Do you dare insinuate that I, a soldier of the king, would tell a falsehood?"

"Well, I don't believe you were given orders to keep everybody out of Camden," was the defiant reply.

"You don't, eh?" The soldier's tone was threatening in the extreme.

"No, I do not. And I ask you to let me pass. My father may die and——"

"Let him!" roared the redcoat. "Who cares? Let him die—and if he is as impudent as his son it will be as well

to let him fight it out without any doctor. Just you right-about face, now, and get back home in a hurry, if you don't want to get a musket ball through you!"

The boy looked the redcoat straight in the eyes. "You cowardly scoundrel—to talk thus of a sick man whom you never saw and who never did you any harm!" The boy's tone was filled with righteous indignation and fairly rang.

"What's that?" the redcoat cried. "You young dog, I'll have your life for that."

As he spoke the redcoat leaped forward and made a lunge at the youth with his bayonet with the intention of running it through him. The boy was too quick for him, however, and leaped aside, the bayonet missing him.

"Don't you try that again!" the boy cried, his voice ringing out clearly and defiantly.

"But I will!" roared the redcoat. "I'll not only try it again, but I'll do it this time."

As he spoke the redcoat made another lunge at the boy, who again escaped injury by leaping quickly to one side. The redcoat's bayonet ran through the boy's coat, however, and tore a great hole in the garment.

Then something happened. Quick as a flash the youth drew an old pistol from a belt which was buckled around his waist, and, leveling it in the redcoat's face, fired. His aim was true. The bullet struck the redcoat fair between the eyes and killed him instantly.

With a groan the stricken man dropped his musket and fell full length upon the ground.

"Jove! I've killed him!" exclaimed the boy, in a tone of horror and with a glance up and down the road to see if any one was in sight. "Well, he would have it. I don't think I am to blame. I'm sure he would have killed me, and I did what I did in self-defense."

The youth stared at the dead body of the redcoat for a few moments and then, stepping forward, he took hold of the coat-collar and dragged the body out to one side of the road, behind some bushes.

"I'm afraid I have done something that will get me into trouble," the boy murmured; "however, I don't know why it should. Nobody saw me shoot him, and they would hardly suspect that a boy like me would do such a thing. I may come out all right, after all. Anyway, there's nothing to hinder me from going on into Camden and getting the doctor, and that is a matter of great importance. I'll be going."

The youth made his way to where the horse was standing, and, leaping into the saddle, rode onward toward Camden at a gallop.

It was a ride of only a few minutes, and as Tom knew

where the doctor's office was he rode straight there before dismounting. Hastening into the doctor's office he told the man of medicine what he wanted.

"So your father is sick, eh, Tom?" remarked the physician, who knew the Morgans well.

"Yes, sir, he is very sick. You will come at once?"

The doctor shook his head and looked grave. "I can come right away, Tom," he replied; "I have three calls to make here in town before I can leave. Two of them are to members of Cornwallis' staff of officers, and, of course, I have to go there promptly when sent for; if I do not, off would go my head."

"I understand that; but you will come just as soon as you can?"

"Yes, my boy; but it will be three or four hours before I can get there."

A grave look appeared on the youth's face and he paled perceptibly. "I'm afraid, sir, that that will be too late," he said in a husky voice. "Oh, if you could only go with me now!"

"I can't do it, my boy, I am sorry to say; but I'll tell you what you do: Tell me, just as nearly as you can, your father's symptoms. Tell me how he acts and how he looks and all about it. It may be then that I can send some medicine that will help him."

The boy did this, the physician listening attentively. He asked a few questions and then went to work and fixed up a small bottle of medicine and gave it to the youth. "Give that to your father according to the directions," he said; "hurry back and I will get there just as soon as I can."

"All right, doctor; and thank you," replied the boy, and then hastening out of the office he leaped upon his horse and galloped out of the town.

He rode onward at a rapid pace, and as he drew near the spot where he had encountered the redcoat sentry when coming to Camden, he saw a party of at least twelve men standing there. He knew they were redcoats because they wore the British uniform and the thought came to him that he was likely to have some trouble. He did not slacken speed, however, but galloped straight ahead.

He was not allowed to pass, however. Five or six of the redcoats ran out in the road in front of him and called upon the youth to halt. There was nothing for it but to obey the command, so Tom reined up the horse and came to a stop.

"Hello!" greeted one of the redcoats. "Who are you?"

"My name is Tom Morgan, sir."

"Where do you live?"

"Up the road about two miles from here."

"Humph! two miles from here, eh?"

"Yes; I live up on Sanders Creek."

"Humph! Where have you been?"

"To Camden."

"To Camden, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was your business in Camden?"

"I went to get a doctor."

"To get a doctor, eh?"

"Yes; my father is sick."

"Why, didn't you get the doctor?"

"He was busy and couldn't come right away."

"Well, Tom Morgan, how long has it been since you
ssed here, going into Camden?"

Tom hesitated and pondered a few moments. "I couldn't
y exactly, sir," he replied; "I should judge that it was
out an hour ago."

"About an hour ago, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! Were you challenged by a sentinel anywhere
this vicinity as you went?"

Tom was a quick-witted fellow, and he understood the
equation. He knew that the redcoats had found the dead
body of their comrade and he felt that they more than half
spected that he had something to do with the sentinel's
death. Should they make up their minds that such was
ally the case they would make Tom a prisoner. Realizing
is the youth quickly decided upon a story to tell them.

"Yes, I was challenged by a sentinel near this spot," the
youth replied.

"Did he halt you?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he say to you?"

"He asked me where I was going."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that I was going to Camden to get a doctor."

"And then—what?"

"He said all right, that I could go ahead."

The redcoat looked at the youth in a searching manner.

"He told you that you could go on, did he?" he queried.

"Yes, sir." Tom met the redcoat's gaze unflinchingly
d answered firmly. He knew that he had a great deal
u stake.

"And you rode on into town?" the redcoat asked.

"I did."

"I suppose you would know the man if you were to see
m again?"

"I think I should, sir; but really I have no time to spare."

The doctor gave me some medicine and told me to hurry
back home and give some of it to my father as quickly as
possible. A few minutes delay here may mean the death of
my father. I must be going."

Tom made a motion as if to start his horse, but the
redcoats did not move. "Don't be in a hurry, young man,"
said the leader; "I want you to come over here and take
a look at the dead body of our comrade and tell whether
or not he is the man you saw."

"The dead body of your comrade, you say?" exclaimed
the youth, simulating amazement and horror.

"Yes; jump down and come over here."

"Really, sir, it would do no good," the youth pro-
tested; "he is undoubtedly the same man who challenged
me, but I don't see what that matters. The important
thing now is for me to get home with this medicine."

"See here, young fellow," the redcoat leader remarked,
"your actions are suspicious."

"Suspicious?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"In many ways. Do you know what I think?"

"No."

"Then I'll tell you: I think you are the fellow who
killed our comrade!"

CHAPTER II.

TOM AND HIS SISTER.

Tom saw that he was in for it. The redcoats suspected
him and would make a prisoner of him unless he managed
to get away in some manner. But how was he to do it?
That was the question. There were a dozen of them and
it looked as if he could not escape. He was not willing to
give up, however, without making an attempt to escape.

"You must be joking!" he cried, simulating amazement.

The redcoat shook his head. "No, I'm not joking," he
said, "our comrade lies here dead; you acknowledge hav-
ing seen and talked with him, and I am of the opinion
that you killed him."

"Why, the idea of such a thing is absurd!" the youth
declared. "Please let me pass; I must get home quickly.
My father may die while I am detained here."

"I can't help that; your father will have to take his
chances. As for you, you are our prisoner!"

But Tom was desperate. "Not yet!" he cried, and then

he gave his horse a kick in the flanks, gave a jerk on the bridle reins and uttered a loud yell. The horse was a mettlesome animal, and not being used to such treatment—in fact, it was a great pet and had always been treated kindly—gave utterance to a snort of anger, and, leaping upward and forward, dashed through the line of redcoats, knocking two of them down as he did so.

Curses and yells of anger and pain escaped the two redcoats, while the leader yelled for the youth to halt.

"Stop!" he cried. "Stop at once or we will riddle you with bullets!"

But Tom did not stop. Instead he urged his horse onward with words and blows.

"Stop!" the redcoat yelled again. "Stop, or you are a dead boy!"

Tom did not answer nor even let on that he heard the command, but leaning forward on the neck of the horse so as to make himself as small a target as possible, he urged the horse onward.

"Fire!" roared the redcoat leader, and his men, who had already leveled their muskets, obeyed the command.

Crash! roar! the volley rang out loudly and the bullets whistled all around the daring fugitive.

One bullet cut through the youth's clothing and grazed his side, but the only effect it had was to cause Tom to urge his horse to renewed exertions.

Onward the fugitive dashed. His horse had not been struck by any of the bullets and he believed that he would be able to make his escape. The redcoats fired another volley, but the bullets fell short, and then Tom knew that for the present, at least, he was out of danger.

"Mount and after him, men!" roared the redcoat leader. "We must capture the young scoundrel!" The men ran and leaped upon their horses and dashed after the fugitive.

He had a good start, however, and his horse was a better one than theirs also and he steadily increased the distance between them. The road crooked and turned through the timber, and presently he was out of sight of his pursuers. He turned aside from the main road and entering a path which led through the timber he rode as fast as the circumstances would permit, the path being a near cut to his home, making the distance only half what it otherwise would have been had he kept to the main road.

It did not take him long to reach his home, and leaping to the ground, in front of the door, he ran into the house. "How is he, mother?" the youth asked, anxiously, of his mother, who met him at the door.

There were tears in the woman's eyes, and her voice

broke and trembled so that she could hardly speak, as she said: "Your father is dead, my dear son!"

"What!" exclaimed the youth, his voice vibrating with sorrow and pain. "Don't tell me that, mother!"

"It is too true, my dear son! He died half an hour ago!"

The boy stood as if dazed. Then he spoke in a strained, unnatural voice. "If the redcoats had not delayed me much I would have been able to get back in time to give him the medicine, and it might have saved his life," he said; "they are to blame, and I shall have revenge upon them, just as sure as my name is Tom Morgan!"

"Don't talk so, Tom!" said his mother; "I wouldn't feel that way about it."

"But I do feel that way about it, mother," was the cold, grim reply; "and I shall make the redcoats suffer for this. They detained me, even after I told them I was going to see a doctor, and it was inhuman and cruel. They had the right to stop me or bother me under such circumstances as that."

"Perhaps not; but—I'm afraid you will get into trouble, Tom. You must not do anything rash."

"That reminds me, mother, that I was pursued by some redcoats and I escaped them only by taking the short cut through the timber. They will be here in a few minutes and they will make a prisoner of me if I don't resist."

"Why should they make a prisoner of you?"

"Because I killed a sentinel who detained me, mother."

"Oh, that is terrible—horrible!"

"I had to do it, mother; he tried to kill me. He plunged at me with his bayonet twice, and the second time he came pretty near getting me. See the hole he tore in my coat."

"That makes a difference, Tom," said the woman; "of course, every one has a right to protect his life."

"Yes, mother; I shot him dead, but it was in self-defense. The redcoats won't take that into consideration, however, and will shoot or hang me, likely, if I give up and let them make me a prisoner; and I am not going to do it. I will make a fight for my life. Where is Lottie?"

"Here, Tom!" replied a girl of perhaps sixteen, stepping into the room. There were tears in her eyes, but they flashed with spirit as she said: "I heard what you said, Tom, and I would fight if I were you. Indeed, I will help you! I have my rifle, and can shoot as good as you can. The redcoats are coming, you say?"

"Yes, Lottie; they will be here in a few minutes. Come, let's get ready to fight them!"

Mrs. Morgan said nothing because she knew it would

do no good, and besides she did not wish her son to fall into the hands of the redcoats.

"You get the guns and ammunition ready, Lottie," said Tom; "I'll be with you in a moment."

The girl hastened away and Tom and his mother went into the room where the dead man lay. The boy stood by the bedside and gazed down upon the calm face of his dead father for a few moments. Then he bent and kissed the cold forehead and without a word turned and left the room. There was a grim, set expression on his face that boded ill for the redcoats who, in the youth's estimation, were responsible for his father's death.

He hastened into the kitchen and found his sister Lottie examining the weapons, the same being two rifles and an old-fashioned musket. Tom still had his pistol and he proceeded to load it. "There!" he said when he had finished, "we have four shots, and I think there will be only six of the redcoats. If they attack us we can make it lively for them."

"So we can," agreed the girl; "we can each fire a shot from the rifles and then I will reload them while you are firing the musket and pistol."

"That is a good plan, sis," said Tom; "and now let's fasten the back door and go and keep watch at the front of the house."

Tom barred the back door and then they went through into the front room.

"There they come, now!" exclaimed Lottie, who happened to glance out of the window.

Tom leaped to her side and looked out. "Just as I expected," he said; "there are six of them."

Then he quickly closed the front door and barred it, after which he returned to the window and watched the redcoats.

The six British soldiers leaped to the ground, tied their horses, and, entering the yard, advanced to the house, and the leader knocked on the door.

Tom did not reply, but he grasped his rifle with a firm grip and a dangerous glint appeared in his eyes. Lottie was fully as plucky as her brother, and held her rifle in readiness for instant use.

Again there came the knock on the door, followed almost immediately by a voice which called out: "Open, in the king's name!"

Tom remained silent and presently there came a kick on the door. "Open, I tell you!" the voice cried. "If you don't, we will break the door down!"

"You break that door down and you will sign the death warrant of yourself and men!" was Tom's defiant answer.

"Oh, ho; you're there, are you?" the voice cried. "I thought we would rouse you up!"

"You'll get us roused up in a way you won't like!"

"Open the door!"

"We won't do it!"

"Then we'll break it down!"

"Go ahead, if you think you had better!"

"Ready, men; now, all together!" cried the voice.

Then there came a crash against the door. The men had hurled themselves against it simultaneously.

The door creaked and groaned, but did not give way. There was no doubt of the fact that another such trial or two would force it, however.

Tom motioned to Lottie. "Come over here!" he whispered; "there is no doubt that they intend to break in and make a prisoner of me, if they can, and as I don't intend to permit it, if I can help it, we might as well get in the first blow. We will take aim and fire at them through the door; then we will get to one side out of range and you can reload the rifles while I guard against them with the musket and pistol."

"All right, Tom," whispered the girl; "when you say the word I will fire!"

"Take aim, sis!" the youth directed.

Both leveled their rifles. Tom waited a few moments until he had taken aim at a spot on the door at about the height of a man's chest, and then he whispered: "Are you ready?"

"Ready!" was the reply.

"Fire!"

Crack! crack! Both shots rang out so near together that it was almost impossible to say whether it was one shot or two. Then a yell of pain, followed by a volley of curses, came to the hearing of the two. Their bullets had certainly found lodgment in the person of at least one redcoat.

"Quick! get out of range of the door, Lottie!" whispered Tom. They leaped aside, and not a moment too soon, either, for the redcoats fired a volley and the bullets zipped across the room and imbedded themselves in the farther wall.

"Curses on you!" roared the redcoat leader, "you have killed one of my men and wounded another! I will make you wish you had never been born when I get my hands on you!"

"But you are not going to get your hands on me if I can help it."

"I'll show you!"

Crash! bang! the redcoats had thrown themselves against the door. It shook and rattled, but did not give way.

Tom and Lottie were busily engaged in loading the rifles. It did not take them long to do this and they were soon ready for the enemy.

"I expect you had better get out of this, Lottie," said Tom; "they'll break the door down about the next time they try that, and they will be so angry that I am afraid they might hurt you."

"I'll risk it, Tom," replied the brave girl; "I will stay right here with you and help you fight them!"

"All right, sis; be ready to give it to them as soon as the door breaks in. As soon as we fire our rifles I will seize the musket while you grab the pistol; then by the time we fire those off there certainly won't be many of the rascals left."

The two held their rifles in readiness and kept their eyes on the door. Just then Mrs. Morgan opened the door which led into the kitchen and said: "Come away, children; come, let us go out by the back doorway and try to make our escape."

"No, no, mother; we'll stay and fight them!" replied Tom. "Shut the door and get back out of the way; they may shoot through the door at any moment and might kill you."

Mrs. Morgan closed the door and Tom and his sister again turned their attention toward the front door. Just then there came a crash and the door flew from its hinges, the cross-bar having given away.

The redcoats half leaped, half tumbled into the house, and as they did so, crack! crack! went two shots and down tumbled two of the British soldiers.

Dropping the rifles Tom and Lottie seized the musket and pistol and fired. One of the remaining two redcoats fell over dead, with a bullet through his heart, while the other staggered backward, wounded in the shoulder.

With a cry of triumph Tom leaped forward and dealt this fellow a blow on the head with the butt of the musket, stretching him senseless on the floor.

At this moment Lottie, who had been looking out of the window, gave utterance to a cry of alarm. "Oh, brother!" she exclaimed, "there come another party of redcoats; I fear we are doomed!"

Tom leaped to her side and looked out through the window. Lottie was right. A party consisting of six redcoats had just ridden up and were dismounting. It was the other half of the original party that Tom had seen when returning from Camden.

"Hurry, sis, and help me load the rifles!" cried Tom; "we'll give them a fight for it yet!"

To pour some powder in the muzzles of the rifles, drop

in a bullet and ram it home, took but a few moments, and the two were standing, rifles in hand, ready to offer battle when the redcoats reached the house.

"What's the trouble here, Mortimer?" one of the newcomers asked of a wounded redcoat who lay groaning on the ground in front of the door.

"Oh, there are some fiends to fight in there, Captain Gordon!" was the reply; "be careful or you will get a bullet through you!"

"How many are there in there, Mortimer?"

"I don't know; but I should judge that there are four, at the least."

"Are all the boys down?"

"Every one of them, captain."

"That is bad, but we will soon avenge them!" Then he lifted up his voice and called out: "Hello, in there!"

"Hello, yourself!" replied Tom.

"I call upon you to lay down your arms and surrender!"

"Just keep on calling on us to do so; that is all the good it will do you!"

"Then you refuse to surrender?"

"We do!"

"It will go hard with you if you show fight."

"It will go hard with you fellows, too!"

"See here; I don't want to have to shoot you down in cold blood."

"Never mind about that. My blood is hot enough. You caused the death of my father, and my blood is almost at the boiling point. Just come on, as soon as you like, and I will see if we can't send a few more of you to keep company with the fellows you see lying about."

A curse escaped the lips of Captain Gordon. "You are saucy enough, anyway!" he growled.

"You will find that we are a great deal more than simply saucy!" was the cool reply.

While talking Tom and Lottie were busily engaged loading the musket and pistol, and they succeeded in getting both loaded, after which they felt better.

"Now we will be able to give them a good fight, sis!" whispered Tom.

"You are right, Tom," the girl replied, with a nod. Her eyes were shining with excitement, and a round, red spot was glowing on each cheek. Lottie was a warrior, if ever there was one who wore female garb.

"Are you going to surrender?" called out the captain in a threatening tone.

"No!" was the determined reply; "we are not going to surrender. Just come ahead whenever you get ready and see what will happen to you!"

"It will be the death of you!"

"And of you fellows, too!"

"Bah! you can't do anything against my force!"

"We have just laid out six, and your force numbers the same. I am confident that we can do the same thing right over again."

"Do you hear that, captain?" groaned the wounded redcoat. "I would let this job go if I were you and go back to Camden and get half a company. That will be safest and best; and for goodness sake, take me with you! I am suffering terribly."

"No," said the officer, obstinately, "I am going to go for those rebels and have it out with them. You fellows had to break the door down, and that gave them the advantage over you."

"You will find that we have the advantage, anyway," came from within the house. "You had better stay out of here and go your way as the man advises you."

"Bah! you can't frighten us away!"

"You would do well to go away."

"Bosh! Are you ready to make a rush, men?"

"We are ready to obey orders, captain," was the reply of one.

"Which is as much as to say you don't admire the prospect, eh, old man?" remarked the captain.

"That's about it, captain."

"Well, I can't say I admire it, myself; but we must not let three or four rebels frighten us away."

"No, I don't approve of that, myself."

"You will wish you had, though," groaned the wounded redcoat; "that is, if you are in a condition to wish anything after the affair is over."

"Oh, stop your croaking!" growled the captain.

"That's what I'm afraid of," was the reply; "that I will croak if I don't get taken away from here and to some place where I will be taken care of."

The captain paid no more attention to the wounded redcoat, but again addressed his men. "Get ready, boys!" he ordered; "we will go right into that house and see who and what those people are who have done this work!"

The soldiers held their muskets in readiness and awaited the order to charge forward. The order soon came. "Forward, men, and give it to the scoundrels!" the captain cried.

The men dashed forward, and the first man who entered the doorway went down with a bullet through his heart. The second man also went down, he being Lottie's victim, but he was only wounded, not killed.

With yells and curses the other four were following, when there came an interruption.

"Hold, there! What does this mean?" cried a loud, ringing voice.

The redcoats paused and whirled—to find themselves confronted by at least one hundred determined-looking fellows of about eighteen to twenty years of age. The newcomers were armed and had the redcoats covered with a hundred frowning musket muzzles.

The redcoats stared in open-mouthed amazement.

CHAPTER III.

"THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76."

"W—who are y-you?" finally gasped out Captain Gordon.

"It doesn't matter who we are," was the calm reply of one who seemed to be the leader—though none of the youths wore a uniform. "What we want to know is, why are you attacking the people of this house?"

"W-why, you ask?" stammered the captain.

"Yes, why?"

"W-well, you s-see, they have killed a number of our comrades, and that is the reason we were attacking them."

"Yes, but your comrades must have attacked them in the first place."

The captain looked worried. "I—I—d-don't know how about that," he said; "we—that is, myself and five comrades were not here when the first trouble took place. We came here and found six dead and wounded and we simply went in to get revenge, that is all."

"Your comrades must have been the aggressors. Everything goes to show it. They are here at the house; indeed, some are in the house; and the door is broken, showing that they gained entrance by force. I think they were to blame, and that you fellows are also to blame."

Just then Tom Morgan appeared at the door, musket in hand. Lottie had looked out of the window and had told him that there was a great crowd of strangers out there, and he believing that friends were at hand did not hesitate to show himself.

"You are right, sir," he said quietly, "the redcoats were the aggressors. They came here and demanded admittance, and when it was refused them they broke the door down. We met them with bullets, and succeeded in putting the entire force of six men down, dead and wounded. Do you blame us?"

"I most assuredly do not!" was the hearty reply. "You did just right—eh, boys?"

"Of course he did!" came in a chorus from the bronzed youths.

"And then another gang, consisting of six men, came," continued Tom; "they called upon us to surrender, and when we refused they started to come in and we shot down two more of them—and we would have done our best to kill every one of them, too!" in a grim, determined voice.

"Three cheers for you, young fellow—whatever your name may be!" cried one of the youths. "You are all right!"

"Who do you mean by 'we'?" asked the leader of the party of youths. "How many of you are there?"

"My sister and myself," was the reply.

"Your—sister and yourself!" almost gasped the young leader of the party.

"Yes, sir."

"You don't mean to say that just you two did all this—this damage?" indicating the dead and wounded redcoats.

Tom nodded. "Yes," he said simply; "just me and sis was all there was of our army, but we put up as good a fight as we could."

"I should say you did!" in a tone of admiration.

Captain Gordon and his men looked at one another with an expression of amazement and unbelief on their faces. "It can't be possible!" said the captain. "Two persons—two men, even—could not have whipped six British soldiers."

"But sis and I did it alone and unaided," said Tom, quietly, and his tone and air carried conviction.

"Where is your sister now?" asked the leader of the youths, a look of interest on his face.

Tom turned and looked over his shoulder. "Come here, sis!" he called, and then, to the surprise of everybody, the redcoats especially, a beautiful, blushing and shrinking girl of not to exceed sixteen years appeared in the doorway and stood by the youth's side.

An involuntary murmur of admiration went up from the youths.

"What a beautiful little girl!"

"Isn't she, though!"

"And so brave!"

"She's a regular little soldier!"

Such were a few of the murmured exclamations given utterance to by the youths.

Instantly the leader of the youths doffed his hat and bowed to the maiden, his followers all doing the same.

"Three cheers for the little soldier in petticoats, boys!"

the youth cried, and the cheers were given with a vim. The girl blushed like a peony, and then with a graceful bow she turned away and disappeared from sight.

Then the leader of the party of youths turned to the captain and said: "Here are eight of your comrades, dead and wounded. If you will promise not to bother these good people again I will permit you to bury your dead comrades and carry the wounded away. What do you say?"

"So far as I am concerned that will be all right," the captain replied; "I shall not, of my own accord, try to harm these people. But if my superior officers order me to come back here, I shall have to do so."

"I understand that. Well, get to work and be careful what kind of a story you tell when you go back to Camden. Tell the truth and only the truth."

"I will do that, of course."

"One word, sir," said Tom, addressing the young leader of the party of stranger youths; "these redcoats are responsible for the death of my father, which is the reason I have been so merciless in dealing with them."

"They caused the death of your father?" in surprise.

"Yes; he lies in this house, dead, at the present moment."

"Did they kill him?"

"They caused his death indirectly. He was very sick, and I was on my way to Camden to get a doctor when one of their sentinels delayed me and——"

"You killed him!" broke in Captain Gordon.

Tom nodded assent. "I did," he acknowledged, "I killed him in self-defense. He detained me, and because I protested he was going to run me through with his bayonet. I defended myself, that is all, by shooting him dead. Then I went on in to Camden and got some medicine, and when I got back to where I had been stopped by the sentinel I found this gang of twelve men. They stopped me and delayed me long enough so that when I did get away from them and reached my home I was too late. My father was dead. But I charge his death to their account, the same as if they had shot him dead!"

"And rightly, too, I am sure," said the young stranger. "And now, have you any objections to what I have suggested to the captain here? If so, say so; and whatever you say shall be done."

"No, I have no objections to offer. I think it is the best and easiest way to get rid of the whole gang of redcoats. I will just say to the captain, however, that it will be dangerous to come fooling around here. If you do come around here again you will do so at your peril."

"That is all right," said the captain; "I shall not come

here again on my own account. If I am ordered to come here I shall have to come, that is all."

"Of course, I shall not blame you for obeying orders; but you will have to look out for yourself, just the same. I shall not spare you on that account."

"I don't ask you to do so."

The four redcoats went to work, Tom having brought them a spade, and in the edge of the timber, back of the house, they dug a grave large enough to hold the five dead men. When the work of interring their comrades was finished they made impromptu litters and fastened them between two horses; on these litters the wounded men were placed and then the redcoats took their departure.

When they were gone Tom Morgan turned to the leader of the party of youths and asked: "Will you tell me who you and your comrades are? I am sure you are patriots."

"Yes," was the reply, "we are patriots. Have you ever heard of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

Tom started, and an exclamation escaped him. "I should say I have heard of them!" he cried, sweeping the faces of the youths with his eager eyes. "Do you—surely you don't mean to say that—that——"

"These are 'The Liberty Boys of '76'—yes, that is just what I mean to say."

"Glory!" cried Tom, "I have heard of the 'Liberty Boys' hundreds of times, but I never expected to have the pleasure of seeing them. And you are——"

"My name is Dick Slater."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom, leaping forward and seizing the young man's hand and shaking it heartily; "I am proud to shake hands with you, Dick Slater! Oh, but for the sorrow I feel on account of the death of my father, this would be a happy day for me!"

"I sympathize with you," said Dick Slater, quietly; "I too, lost my father—at the hands of Tories, however, one of whom shot him down in front of our house."

"That was terrible, Dick."

"So it was, my boy; but, like you, I settled with the scoundrels who did the dastardly work!"

"I'll warrant you did!" said Tom, in admiration.

CHAPTER IV.

A FIGHT WITH THE REDCOATS.

It was indeed Dick Slater and his company of "Liberty Boys." They had been down in the vicinity of Charleston, and had come up into the vicinity of Camden for the pur-

pose of assisting General Gates, who was marching toward Camden for the purpose of engaging the British army stationed at that point in battle.

"You have not told me your name yet, my boy," said Dick.

"My name is Morgan—Tom Morgan."

"Glad to know you, Tom," said Dick.

"Thank you!" the boy replied, his eyes shining. Then he raised his voice and cried out: "Mother! Lottie! Come out here!"

Mrs. Morgan and Lottie came forth from the house and were told who the youths were by Tom, who was greatly excited. Mrs. Morgan greeted the youths pleasantly and thanked Dick for having come to the assistance of her son and daughter.

"I shudder to think what might have happened had you not come," she said; "I fear that my darling children would have been killed, for they could hardly have triumphed over all the redcoats."

"Well, now, we would have made them fewer in number than they were, wouldn't we, sis?" exclaimed Tom.

"We had two shots left," said the girl, in a voice which was sweet as music. "We could have dropped two more of them, I am sure."

"Hurrah for Lottie Morgan, the bravest girl in America!" cried Bob, and the other youths nodded in token that they approved of this statement. They would undoubtedly have given three cheers for the maiden had it not been that they knew her father lay dead in the house and did not wish to make the noise.

"I am not at all sure the four remaining redcoats would have got the better of your two brave children, madam," said Dick. "They made a wonderful fight of it and proved that they are dangerous persons to trifle with."

"That's what they did!" coincided Mark Morrison, and the rest of the "Liberty Boys" nodded assent to this statement.

"But what are you doing down here in South Carolina, Dick?" asked Tom. "I thought you were fighting the redcoats up in the North."

"Things are rather quiet up there just now, Tom, and General Washington sent us down into this part of the country to help look after the redcoats in the South."

"So that's it, eh?"

"Yes. And, by the way, Tom, have you heard any news of General Gates and the patriot army?"

The youth shook his head. "I heard a rumor to the effect that they were coming down here, but nothing definite," he replied. "Are they coming, sure enough?"

"Yes, they are coming, Tom; there is no doubt regarding that. But it is hard to say just where they are at the present time."

"I should say it would be."

"We have come here to join the army and help fight the British at Camden, and we wish to find Gates as soon as possible."

"Well, I can't help you any, for I have heard nothing definite regarding the movements of the army in question."

"I am sorry for that; but you can aid us, Tom, in one respect at least."

"What is that? I shall be only too glad to do it."

"Permit us to stay here until the patriot army comes along."

"We will be only too glad to have you do that!" eagerly. "But won't it be dangerous to stay here so close to the British?"

"Oh, I guess not. How far is it to Camden?"

"Three miles."

"That isn't very far, is it?"

"No; and they'll be back here, too. You may be sure of that. They won't be willing to let this matter rest as it is."

"I think you are right, Tom; and for that reason it will be a good plan for us to remain here or near here. We will be on hand to render you assistance."

"That will be nice for us," said Mrs. Morgan; "I hope you will stay, Mr. Slater."

"Very well; we will do so. On second thought, however, we will not stay here at the house, but will go over in the timber, back of the barn lot, and go into camp."

"We would be glad to have you in the house. I think we have room enough."

"No, I think it will be best for us to go over into the timber and then if the redcoats come nosing around here we will be able to come in upon them and give them a surprise."

"True; well, we have plenty of feed for your horses, and food for your men, so don't hesitate to call upon us for anything you need in that line."

"Thank you; that will be a big item for us—and for you folks, too, for we will eat you out of house and home."

"I guess there is no danger of that—and even if there was it would be just the same, for you saved the lives of my son and daughter, I am confident, and we owe you a greater debt of gratitude than we can ever repay."

"Don't speak of that again, Mrs. Morgan. We were only

too glad of a chance to render a little assistance to people who are in sympathy with the great cause."

Dick now conducted his "Liberty Boys" over to the point where he intended to go into camp, and they found that it was just suited to their needs. They began work of making an encampment that would be more or less permanent, and when this had been finished Dick selected two of the youths and sent them down the road in the direction of Camden, with instructions to keep a sharp lookout for the redcoats.

"As soon as you see them coming, come back, one of you, and let me know," he said.

"All right," was the reply and the two took their departure.

The word had gone out that Mr. Morgan was dead, and the neighbors began coming in to console the widowed woman and the young folks who were thus bereaved. There were a number of patriot neighbors residing in the vicinity and their visits did Mrs. Morgan a world of good.

When they heard of the visit of the redcoats and the brave fight that Tom and Lottie had made they were once angry and delighted. "The scoundrels! to come and attack the home of a patriot, and a widow, in such a manner!" was the general idea expressed in words by more than one. And then they complimented Tom and Lottie and told them that they were the bravest boy and girl in America, which was not so very far out of the way.

Among those who visited the Morgan home that afternoon was a handsome youth of perhaps nineteen years of age. His name was George Martin, and he had been keeping company with Lottie Morgan for several months. "Goodness, Lottie! you don't know how proud I am of you!" he told her, when they had wandered away to have quiet talk. "Just to think that you should have stood beside Tom and fought the redcoats! You are a dear sweet, brave little girl!" and then taking her in his arms he kissed her again and again.

"Oh, George!" murmured the girl, "you mustn't talk like that, you'll make me vain. I felt like Tom did about the matter—that the redcoats had indirectly caused father's death—and I was glad of a chance to strike the redcoats a blow."

"Well, you did it, Lottie; you and Tom killed five redcoats and wounded three more, which is something I would hardly have believed possible."

"We had to do it, George. If we hadn't, the redcoats would have made a prisoner of Tom and he would have been taken to Camden and shot or hanged."

"There is no doubt about that."

About four o'clock in the afternoon one of the scouts that Dick had sent out came running into camp and informed the young commander of the "Liberty Boys" that the redcoats were coming.

"How many of them are there, do you think?" asked Dick.

"Oh, I judge there must be two hundred at least."

"Two hundred, eh?"

"Yes."

"How far away are they?"

"About a mile."

"Good!" exclaimed Dick; "that will give us plenty of time to fix up a surprise for them."

"What are you going to do?" asked Tom Morgan.

"I am going to station my men in the timber by the roadside and give the redcoats a warm reception when they come along."

"Good!" cried Tom; "I'm going with you!"

"Let me go, too?" said George Martin, who had returned from his walk with Lottie, and approached in time to hear what was said.

"I shall be glad to have you both along," replied Dick.

Then he gave orders for the "Liberty Boys" to get ready to move and they hastened to obey. Two minutes later the party moved out of the yard and down the road in the direction of Camden. A quarter of a mile from the house there was a bend in the road. The timber was quite heavy at this point and there was also a thick growth of bushes, which, with the underbrush, would afford the youths an excellent hiding place. It would be impossible for the redcoats to see them.

"Here is the very place we have been looking for," said Dick. "We can take up our position behind these bushes and give the redcoats a volley, after which we can leap behind trees, and when the redcoats fire they will be unable to harm us. Then we can give them a pistol volley or two, and by that time I think they will be ready to take the back track to Camden."

The other youths agreed with this view of the case and proceeded to take up their positions behind the bushes.

Dick gave them a few instructions and then they waited patiently for the enemy to appear. They did not have long to wait. The redcoats soon put in an appearance. There were at least two hundred of them and they came marching along evidently unsuspecting of the fact that they were walking straight into a trap.

Onward they came and presently they were almost opposite the point where the "Liberty Boys" were concealed.

Dick waved his hand to the youths, which was the signal

for them to take aim, and they at once proceeded to do so. Dick waited just long enough for his men to get good aim and then upon the air rose the sharp command:

"Fire!"

Crash! roar! The volley rang out loudly. It did terrible execution, too. The "Liberty Boys" were veterans. They had been fighting for Liberty almost constantly for nearly four years, and they were veterans in the fullest sense of the word. When about to enter into an engagement with the enemy they were no longer in any way affected by nervousness. They were cool and calm and went at the affair in a matter-of-fact way. They took careful and deliberate aim, and when they fired, the volley, as I have said, did great execution.

At least sixty of the redcoats fell, either dead or wounded. This may seem like a large number to go down as the result of one volley, but the "Liberty Boys" were all dead shots, and at such a short distance they could not miss the marks at which they were aiming. The only reason that more than sixty of the enemy did not fall was because that in many instances two of the "Liberty Boys" fired at the same redcoat. In every such case it insured the death of the redcoat in question, but it lessened the total number to be brought down.

The redcoats were thrown into terrible disorder. Yells and curses of amazement and anger escaped the lips of those who had been uninjured, while groans and cries of pain went up from the wounded men.

"Fire a volley into the bushes!" roared the commander of the redcoats. "Fire! and then charge the scoundrels!"

The redcoats leveled their muskets and fired a volley into the bushes from behind which had come the storm of bullets a few moments before. The volley did no damage, however. The "Liberty Boys" had followed instructions, and the instant they had fired the volley had leaped back and taken refuge behind trees.

"Now charge!" roared the redcoat commander. "Give the scoundrels the bayonet! We'll teach them how to lay in wait for us and shoot us down from ambush!"

The redcoats rushed forward and had almost reached the bushes when there came another volley. It was from pistols, and while not so much damage was inflicted as when the muskets were used, at least thirty of the redcoats went down, dead or wounded.

"Now another volley!" cried Dick. The youths had a pistol in each hand and at the command from Dick they fired another volley, which dropped twelve or fifteen of the enemy and added greatly to the confusion and demoralization of the redcoats.

Dick was a shrewd commander. He possessed all the qualities which go to make a great general. He saw that the time was at hand for striking the redcoats the finishing blow.

"Charge, 'Liberty Boys'!" he cried. "Charge! and give the scoundrels the bayonet!"

The youths obeyed the command on the instant. They bounded forward, muskets in hand, giving utterance to a loud cheer as they did so.

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" they cried as they leaped through the bushes. The next instant they were upon the redcoats and they used the bayonets so effectively that the redcoats were overcome with terror, and, yielding to the sudden feeling, dropped their muskets and took to their heels. Of the two hundred who had come, only about seventy-five or eighty were now on their feet, and the way they ran was a caution. It was evident that they thought there was great danger that they would meet the same fate that had overtaken their comrades.

"Come back!" called out Dick. "Come back and look after your wounded comrades! We won't fire upon you!"

The commander of the party of redcoats, who was among those who had taken flight, heard and understood Dick's words, and finally managed to get his men to stop. Taking a white handkerchief from his pocket he stuck it on the end of his sword and came walking back toward the scene of the late encounter. When he was within twenty yards of where the "Liberty Boys" stood he paused.

"Did you really mean what you said?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied Dick.

"And you will not fire upon us if we come back?"

"We will not. There are twenty-five or thirty wounded men here who need attention, and as we have neither the time nor inclination to attend to them I prefer to let you come back and do it yourselves."

"Very well," said the British officer, sullenly; "but I will just tell you this: If you do not keep your word and fire upon us it will go hard with you! You and your men will be run to earth and killed, if it takes the entire British army to do it!"

"The fear of what the British might do in case we fired upon you would not keep us from doing so," was the calm reply; "we have no fear of the British. I have given you my word, and I always keep it."

"Very well; I am glad to hear that you will keep your word."

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" withdrew into the timber and the redcoats came back to the scene of the encounter and began ministering to the wants of their wounded com-

panions. They gave the poor fellows water and dressed the wounds as best they could with scarcely any means at their command for the purpose. Then the commander sent a man to Camden, with instructions to have wagons brought for the purpose of conveying the wounded men to the town. He told the fellow to see to it that a number of spades were brought along, as the dead men must be buried.

The man was gone scarcely more than an hour when he returned, accompanied by three comrades; each of the four was driving a team hitched to a wagon.

The wounded men were at once placed in the wagons and taken to Camden, while the other soldiers remained and buried their dead comrades. This done, they made their way back to Camden, and the commander of the party was at once summoned to appear before General Cornwallis.

CHAPTER V.

THE BURNING HOUSE.

General Cornwallis was walking backward and forward across the floor of his private room in the building occupied as headquarters when the officer put in an appearance. The general acted like a caged tiger and he whirled upon the newcomer almost fiercely.

"What is this I hear!" he cried. "Is it true that the party which I sent out in search of those rebels was ambushed by them and more than half their number killed and wounded?"

"It is true, sir," the officer replied.

"Humph! How did it happen?"

"I hardly know, sir. We ran into an ambuscade when we were not thinking of such a thing and that is about all there is of it."

"How many of our men were killed?"

"Ninety, sir."

"And how many wounded?"

"Thirty-two."

"Terrible! terrible!" growled Cornwallis. "And how many of the scoundrels did you kill?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know, eh?"

"No; we fired one volley, but had no opportunity of learning whether or not we had inflicted any damage upon the rebels."

"Well, who are those rebels, anyhow, Major Marsh?" The major was silent a few moments as if pondering, and then he said: "I don't know for sure, General Cornwallis, but I have a suspicion regarding their identity." "Out with it, then. Who do you think they are?" "Have you ever heard of a company of young fellows who call themselves 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?" the major asked.

General Cornwallis paused abruptly and glared at the questioner. "What's that!" he exclaimed. "Did I ever hear tell of 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' you ask? I have more than heard of them; I have seen them on the field of battle a number of times. But why do you ask? Surely you do not mean to say that the rebels who attacked you were——"

"The Liberty Boys of '76,'" the other said, nodding his head. "Yes, that is just what I mean to say; I am confident that that is who they were."

"What makes you think so?" asked General Cornwallis. "Several things."

"Name some of them."

"Well, they were such daring and desperate fighters, for one thing."

General Cornwallis nodded. The manner in which they attacked you savors very much of the style of warfare usually adopted by the 'Liberty Boys,' he said. "What else made you think they were the 'Liberty Boys'?"

"They are all young fellows, their ages being from nineteen to twenty-one years, I should say."

"What else?"

"They are bronzed by exposure to almost the hue of Indians and are evidently veterans."

"That fits the 'Liberty Boys' first-rate," said the general; "was there anything else?"

"They had a peculiar battle-cry."

General Cornwallis started. "What was it?" he asked.

"It was, 'Down with the king! Long live Liberty!'"

"That settles it!" exclaimed the general. "Those fellows are undoubtedly 'The Liberty Boys of '76'! That is their battle-cry. I have heard them give utterance to it more than once."

"They are certainly terrors in a fight," remarked Major Marsh.

"You are right, they are terrors; and their leader, Dick Slater, is one of the shrewdest young rascals I ever encountered. He has been a veritable thorn in the flesh for nearly four years, and has caused us more trouble than a regiment of soldiers. Why, there is a reward of five hundred pounds offered for his capture."

The major looked interested. "That is a neat little sum of money," he remarked; "I have a good mind to go to work and see if I can't win it."

"You will earn it if you ever get it in that way," was the significant reply; "one thing is sure, however, we must get even with those young rascals for their terrible work of this afternoon."

"You are right," agreed Major Marsh, nodding his head; "we cannot let the matter rest as it is. We must either kill them or drive them out of the country."

"So we must; and I will give you the task of doing the work, major."

"Thank you, sir; I shall be glad to be assigned to the task."

"Very good; consider the matter settled. I will leave everything to you. Take as many men as you wish to and go about the matter in your own way. All that I shall require of you is that you kill those 'Liberty Boys' or drive them out of the country."

"I will do it, sir, if it can be done."

"Oh, I guess it can be done; take plenty of men and exercise all possible care. Don't let them ambush you this time."

"I shall not do so; I will feel my way this time and will keep scouts out ahead of us."

"Quite right! don't overlook anything or neglect any precautions, for I tell you, Dick Slater and his 'Liberty Boys' are dangerous foes."

"I have already found that out to my cost, sir, and I will be very careful."

The major then took his departure, and, going to his quarters, began making preparations for the work in hand. Presently he went out and began making up a party to go with him in search of the "Liberty Boys." He had no trouble in this as all the soldiers were eager to get a chance to strike a blow at the "rebels" who had killed so many of their comrades. When they learned that the "rebels" in question were "The Liberty Boys of '76," they were even more eager to go with the major on the expedition, for they preferred going after big game, as was natural.

They got ready as quickly as possible and set out immediately after supper. The major thought it would be safer to approach the point where the "Liberty Boys" were supposed to be at night than in the daytime. He had had one experience of daylight work when opposed to the youths, and wished to try it when darkness was over all. Then, too, he had secured the services of four of the most skillful scouts in the entire British army at Camden. The

four were Tories who had joined the army, and who, having lived in that neighborhood for years, were familiar with the country, and were, moreover, skilled in woodcraft—something of which the redcoats knew nothing whatever. All they knew how to do was to march in perfect align and fight when the enemy appeared before them. In the work of fighting after the fashion of the Indians they were of no value whatever, and this gave the patriots considerable advantage, as a general thing.

Major Marsh was determined to take force enough so that he would be enabled to crush the "Liberty Boys," and so he had five hundred men in his party—a regular little army.

Meanwhile what were Dick and his "Liberty Boys" doing? They had remained in the edge of the timber until the redcoats had finished burying their comrades and taken their departure, and then they had made their way back to their encampment.

Dick called Bob Estabrook to one side and the two held a council. "I wish to ask your opinion on this matter, Bob," said Dick. "We struck that party of redcoats a pretty hard blow and it is my opinion that they will take immediate steps to try to get even with us. What do you think?"

"I think as you do, Dick. We certainly went for them rough-shod and they will be eager to get back at us."

"Yes; and they won't be very long about it, either. In my opinion they will be back here before very long, with an overwhelming force."

"That's just about what will happen, Dick."

"The question then is, Bob, what shall we do?"

Bob pondered a few moments and then shook his head. "I hardly know, Dick," he said. "You're better at figuring on those kind of things than I am. I guess you can think up something to do, can't you?"

"Well, I have thought of a plan that gives promise of being fairly successful."

"What is it, Dick?"

"It is this: That we go about half way to Camden and there, concealing ourselves in the edge of the timber by the roadside, wait till the redcoats march past us and then make an attack upon them from the rear. What do you think of the plan, Bob?"

"I think it is all right, Dick; they won't be looking for an attack from the rear, and will be taken by surprise."

"You are right; and it would be impossible to surprise them from the front, for, warned by their experience of this afternoon, they will have scouts out who would discover our presence and give the alarm."

"So they would; but by coming after them from the rear we will be able to get close to them without being discovered."

"I think so, Bob; I am confident that we will be able to give them a pretty severe blow."

The "Liberty Boys" ate an early supper and then set out on their journey. Tom Morgan and George Martin accompanied them and the former acted as guide and conducted the party through the timber in such a manner as to cut off at least one-third of the distance. A wall of a mile brought them out onto the main road, by which road it was about a mile and a half to Camden and about the same distance to the Morgan home.

The main body of the "Liberty Boys" took up a position a hundred yards back from the road, while four of the number were detailed to do scouting duty and keep watch for the coming of the enemy.

It was now dark, but it was a nice, clear night, and it would be possible to distinguish objects at quite a distance, although, of course, they could not be plainly seen.

The "Liberty Boys" had been in their position an hour and a half at least when one of the scouts came to Dick and reported that some redcoat scouts had just passed.

"The enemy will be along shortly, then," said Dick. "Go back and keep a sharp lookout and then come back and tell me the instant you discover that the redcoats are coming."

"All right, Dick; I'll let you know when we see or hear them coming."

The scout went back and was gone nearly half an hour. Then he returned with the information that the enemy was approaching.

"Jove! there must be an army of them, Dick!" he said. "I think we will have our hands full if we go for them now."

"Well, we will go for them," said Bob Estabrook, grimly. "We will go for them rough-shod!"

"Get ready, boys!" said Dick. "And you, Sam, stay back and stay till the entire British force has passed, and then come back and tell me."

"All right;" and the youth hastened away.

The "Liberty Boys" listened eagerly, and soon the tramp of the British could be heard as they marched along the road.

"Sam was right; there is almost an army of them," said Dick, as he listened. Much practice had made it possible for him to estimate, with approximate correctness, the number of men in a body that might march past within his hearing, and he told Bob that there were at least five hundred of the redcoats.

"That is rather big odds against us, old man," said Bob.

"Yes, in an open fight, where we would have nothing in our favor; but by taking them from the rear, and by surprise, we will be able to, in a measure, equalize matters even if we were intending to fight it out to a finish. That, however, we will not do as I have no wish to lose any of my men if I can avoid it; so I shall simply strike them as hard a blow as possible and then get away from them."

"That will be the best plan, I think, myself," replied Bob. "It will be more of a victory to kill and wound fifty to a hundred of them and get away without being injured in return, than to kill two hundred and lose fifty of our own men."

"That's the way I look at it; so be ready, all, to obey the signals. The instant I give the signal to retreat, do so; and be very careful to retreat in such a manner as to protect yourselves by taking advantage of the shelter afforded by the trees and underbrush."

The youths said they would do so, and just then Sam Sanderson came hurrying up. "They have passed, Dick," he said, "and there must be half a regiment at least."

"That is the way I sized them up, Sam," was Dick's reply. Then he gave the order for the "Liberty Boys" to move.

They obeyed the order and moved through the timber, going diagonally across toward the road so as to strike it at a point where they would be near the rear guard of the British.

When they reached the edge of the timber where it bordered the road, they found that they had judged the matter correctly, for the rear guard of the British was opposite them.

Dick did not lose a moment, but gave the signal, and then of a sudden there came the roar of a volley from the hundred muskets of the "Liberty Boys."

It was night, and, of course, the youths were unable to do as good execution as when they had the light of day to assist them in taking aim, but nevertheless the volley did considerable damage, dropping a score of the redcoats, either killed or wounded, and filling the hearts of the redcoats with anger and consternation.

The redcoats had not been expecting an attack from the rear, and the sudden volley was demoralizing.

Shouts and curses went up from the British soldiers, mingled with which were groans of pain from the wounded men.

"Quick, boys, give them a couple of volleys from your pistols!" cried Dick.

The youths obeyed and fired two volleys in quick suc-

cession, killing and wounding a number of the British and adding greatly to the demoralization of the enemy.

Then Dick gave utterance to the shrill, quavering whistle which was the signal to retreat, and the youths hastened to obey.

The redcoats fired a volley, but so skillful were the "Liberty Boys" in protecting themselves behind trees that no particular damage was done. Three or four of the youths were wounded, but only slightly, and by the time the redcoats fired a second volley they were far enough back in the timber to be out of range.

Dick's idea had been that the redcoats, as soon as they learned that the youths were behind them, would turn around and come back in search of them, but they did not do it. Instead they kept right on going.

"I don't understand that," he said; "however, you load your weapons, boys, and we will go after them again. Perhaps we will be able to strike them a hard enough blow next time so that they will be eager to give chase to us. I want to stop them from going on to your house, Tom, if possible."

"I hope you will be able to do so, Dick," Tom replied, soberly; "I should hate it if they should succeed in getting to the house, for they would frighten mother and sis almost into fits."

"I don't think they would scare Lottie very much," said George Martin.

"That's so; sis is a brave girl, but without any men folks at all around she would be afraid."

"Well, come on, boys, and we will give them another blow," said Dick, and they set out after the British at a rapid pace.

It did not take long to overtake the rear guard as the redcoats were marching at only an ordinary pace, and as in the former instance the "Liberty Boys" had fired a volley before the enemy knew they were anywhere near. The youths followed the musket volley with two pistol volleys, and then leaped into the edge of the timber and took refuge behind trees. They were just in time, for the redcoats fired a volley and then came charging in that direction. The "Liberty Boys" retreated rapidly, but in such a manner as to not give the enemy a chance at them, and easily kept out of the way.

The redcoats, finding that they could not overtake the nimble youths, fired a couple of volleys from their pistols and rejoined the main force in the road. This second attack from the rear did not stop the redcoats, however; they kept onward, and it was evident that they intended going to the Morgan house before stopping.

Having become satisfied of this fact, Dick told the youths that they would take the short cut and try to get there ahead of the enemy and warn Mrs. Morgan and Lottie.

"Load your muskets and pistols as we go," he ordered, and, Tom, take the lead and get us back to your house as quickly as possible."

Tom was only too glad to do this, for he was very anxious regarding his mother and sister. He led the way at a rapid walk, and fifteen minutes later they came to the edge of the timber at a point seventy-five yards back of the stable. As they came in sight of the house exclamations of wrath and horror escaped the lips of all.

"Awful!"

"Terrible!"

"The scoundrels!"

"That is just like the redcoats!"

The house was on fire! The fire was well under way, the flames leaping high up and crackling as if in delight, while the redcoats were all around the house, watching the fire and evidently taking a great pleasure in the sight of their handiwork.

"My poor father's body!" groaned Tom. "My poor mother and sister!"

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE EXPLOSION.

At this moment there was a little stir in the rear of the "Liberty Boys," and then Dick said to Tom: "Here are your mother and sister, Tom. They escaped from the redcoats, after all."

"Oh, thank goodness for that!" said Tom, and then he hastened to greet his mother and sister and congratulate them on their escape.

"How did you manage to get away from them?" he asked.

"Lottie happened to be out at the front gate," replied Tom's mother; "she heard them coming and came and told me. We hastened to leave the house and made our way back into the timber far enough so that we thought we would be safe."

"I'm so glad you escaped, mother and sis," said Tom, earnestly; "but poor father's body—it is in there yet, is it not?"

"Yes, Tom," replied his mother, bursting into tears; "Lottie and I could not move it."

"It is terrible to think that his body is in there," said Tom, "but," with sudden fierceness, "we will make them pay dearly for having set fire to the house!"

Then a sudden exclamation escaped Tom. "Great guns! I had forgotten about the powder!" he cried. "If those redcoats stay around that burning house long enough they will get the worst shaking up they ever had!"

"You are right, Tom," said Lottie; "there will be a terrible explosion when that powder catches on fire."

"Yes, indeed, sis; you and mother stay here while I go and tell Dick about the powder."

Tom hastened to where Dick was standing and said: "What are you thinking of doing, Dick?"

"We are thinking of creeping up as close to the redcoats as we can get and giving them a volley," was the reply.

"Don't do it, Dick."

"Why not?"

"Because we will be able to inflict more damage on the redcoats by letting them alone than by attacking them."

"What do you mean, Tom? Explain."

"I will. You see, there are four kegs of gunpowder concealed under the floor of the house, and when the fire gets to it there will be a terrible explosion. If the redcoats stay where they are many of them will be killed."

"And serve them right," said Dick, whose wrath had been aroused by the action of the redcoats in setting fire to the house; "as you say, then, Tom, it will be better to let the redcoats alone."

"Yes; let's not do anything to cause the redcoats to leave the vicinity of the house. I want as many of them to get shaken up as possible."

"You're right, Tom; it would be too bad if that powder was to be burned up without doing any damage to the redcoats; we will stay back and give it a chance to get in its work."

"Don't you think we had better get farther away, Dick?"

"I think so; there is no telling how big an explosion that amount of powder will make, and we might as well be on the safe side."

Dick gave the order and the "Liberty Boys" with Mrs. Morgan and Lottie in their midst moved back into the timber far enough so that they thought they would be out of harm's way.

They could just see the burning house by peering through between the trees, and they watched it eagerly.

Presently there came quite a large crash and a great cloud of sparks went up. "The roof has fallen in," said Dick Slater.

"Yes," replied Tom Morgan; "the floor will soon burn through, now, and then—look out for an explosion!"

Mrs. Morgan was weeping. "My poor husband!" she murmured in a broken voice.

Lottie was doing her best to comfort her mother and Dick spoke to her gently, saying: "He knows nothing of it, madam, and you and all of us have the satisfaction of knowing that the men who are responsible for this affair will speedily be punished."

"True," murmured the woman; "but it is hard to think that my poor husband could not have decent burial."

"We'll get even with the scoundrels, mother," said Tom; "just wait a minute!"

All waited and watched eagerly. They could see that, while the redcoats had drawn back somewhat as a result of the falling in of the roof, they were still close enough so that the explosion would create considerable havoc among them.

Suddenly there was a terrible explosion. It made a noise equal to that of twenty cannon, all fired off at once, and all that was left of the burning house was hurled high into the air. Pieces of sills, boards, doors, windows, etc., were hurled high in the air and were rained down for a distance of a hundred yards in every direction. Some of these almost reached the point where the "Liberty Boys" were stationed; had they not had the forethought to retire well back into the timber some of them would undoubtedly have been killed.

And the redcoats? They were taken entirely by surprise. They had not been expecting anything of this kind and those who were not injured were almost paralyzed with terror.

Many had been killed and wounded, however. It was a terrible explosion and created great havoc in the ranks of the redcoats.

Groans, cries, shrieks and curses went up from the wounded, of whom there were nearly half a hundred. As many more had been killed outright. It was a terrible scene, and to crown all it became dark, the light from the burning house ceasing as a result of the explosion.

Major Marsh, the commander of the party of redcoats, had not been injured, and he at once began the work of rousing his men from the stupor of terror into which the explosion had thrown them. This was rather a difficult matter, but he finally succeeded, and by the time he had done so the smoke caused by the burning house and the explosion had cleared away, and as it was a bright, starlit night the redcoats were enabled to look about them

and immediately began the work of attending to their injured comrades.

"This is a terrible affair, Major Marsh!" remarked an under-officer.

"You are right," was the reply; "it was a terrible explosion."

"There must have been a lot of powder stored in the house."

"Yes; I should say that there were a dozen kegs at least."

In this estimate he was mistaken, but he was excusable for overestimating. The explosion had been terrible enough to make one think a whole powder magazine had gone off.

"What is to be done with the injured men, major?"

"They must be gotten to Camden at the earliest possible moment."

"How are we going to manage it?"

"I shall send a messenger to town with instructions for them to send all the wagons they can get hold of."

"That is a good idea."

"Yes;" and then the major called to a soldier and told him to hasten back to Camden and tell General Cornwallis of the disaster, and have him send ambulances. The soldier saluted and took his departure.

The major then called his men up around him and addressed them as follows: "Men, we have met with a terrible misfortune, and while I do not say that the rebels we came here in search of, 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' are directly responsible for it, they are indirectly responsible, and I have this to say: That we must hunt them down and kill the last one of them! What do you say?"

"We say, 'yes'!" was the cry.

"Very well; just as soon as the ambulances come, and we have got the injured men safely started back to Camden, we will make a thorough search for those rebels; and if we find them we will make them wish they had stayed away from this part of the country!"

"Oh, you will, will you?" cried a mocking voice. And then in sharp tones came the command: "'Liberty Boys,' fire!"

The "Liberty Boys" were indeed going for the British rough-shod!

CHAPTER VII.

"GOING FOR THE REDCOATS ROUGH-SHOD."

The sudden attack came as a great surprise to the redcoats. They had not thought that the "rebels" would dare

make an attack on them when they were out in the open ground, but found their mistake.

"At the scoundrels, men!" roared Major Marsh. "At them and shoot and bayonet them to death! They have done quite enough, and it is time we were doing something. At them, I say!"

But the major was dealing with as shrewd a lot of youths as could have been found anywhere, and when his men darted in the direction from which the volley had come they found no one there to shoot and bayonet.

Dick had been too smart for the redcoats. He and his "Liberty Boys" had slipped up till they were within range, and then he had uttered the defiant words; the youths had fired the volley and all had retreated, doing this so promptly that they succeeded in getting away without being fired upon.

The British ran in the direction in which they supposed the youths had gone, but did not catch sight of them; and finally returned to where the injured and wounded men lay. To say that they were angry is putting the matter very mildly. They were almost wild with rage, but they could do nothing save nurse their anger and wait.

The major placed sentinels on every side, however, so as to prevent a repetition of the affair of the attack by the "rebels."

"Those fellows are dangerous, major," said the under-officer.

"You are right," was the reply; "I had no idea that they would be so hard to get at. They are undoubtedly the 'Liberty Boys,' of whom we have heard so much."

"I guess there is no doubt about that. I don't believe any other gang could do what they have done."

"I think not, myself. They are smart and are demons to fight."

"Yes, they have the best of us so far."

"But we will get them yet!" the major declared. "Just wait till we get the injured and wounded men off our hands. Then we will go after the scoundrels and kill every one of them or drive them clear out of the country."

Two hours passed and then the wagons put in an appearance. The injured and wounded men were placed in the wagons, which at once started on their return trip to Camden, and as soon as they were out of the way Major Marsh said to his men: "Now, men, we will go after those scoundrelly rebels! And when we find them we will wipe them off the face of the earth!"

Meanwhile what of the "Liberty Boys"? When they had succeeded in making their escape, after firing the volley, they had continued the retreat, as Dick did not wish

to make another attack or have another encounter until after a safe refuge had been found for Mrs. Morgan and Lottie.

Dick had consulted with Tom on the subject and had learned that there was an old log cabin on the bank of the Catawba River about two miles distant.

"The cabin is so hidden by thick underbrush, and the high bank of the river, that I don't think the redcoats can find it," said Tom. "The cabin is half way down the embankment, and the top of the roof doesn't reach as high as the river bank. It will be a safe hiding place, I think."

"We will go there, then," said Dick; "and they went straight there as possible. After looking things over Dick was of the opinion that they would be safe from discovery at the cabin. He placed out sentinels, however, and in addition sent out six scouts with instructions to keep a sharp lookout, and report if the enemy came in the direction of the cabin."

The scouts took their departure, and, feeling that it would be safe to do so, Dick and his comrades selected a place near the cabin and throwing themselves down upon their blankets, went to sleep. As the cabin was a little one-room affair, it was given over entirely to the use of Mrs. Morgan and Lottie.

About two o'clock in the morning one of the scouts came in and told Dick that the party of redcoats was within half a mile of the cabin and coming toward it. Dick thought the matter over for a few minutes and then proceeded to rouse the "Liberty Boys." He told them that the redcoats were within half a mile of the cabin and coming toward it, and then said: "I guess we will try the same trick on them that we played this evening. We will make a half circuit and come in behind the British and attack them from the rear. They will undoubtedly pursue us, and we can lead them away from the cabin, after which we can make another half circuit and come back here again."

The "Liberty Boys" were in for this and leaving only four of their number to keep watch over the cabin and see that no harm befell Mrs. Morgan and Lottie, they set out.

They made their way through the timber at a good pace, going in a wide circuit, and presently they found that they were in the rear of the enemy. This, of course, was just what they wanted, and the "Liberty Boys" crept up till they were within range, and then at a signal from Dick they poured a volley into the ranks of the surprised redcoats.

"After them!" roared Major Marsh. "Charge the scoundrels! and don't stop till you have killed them or see

tered them to the four winds! Charge them, and fire as you go!"

The redcoats obeyed the orders of their commander, but in the former instances they did not inflict serious damage on the enemy, for the "Liberty Boys" were careful to shelter themselves behind the trees as they retreated. They were so expert at this work that they were enabled to do this and at the same time to retreat faster than the redcoats could follow.

The British fired a volley from their muskets, and two from pistols, in the hope that they might do damage, even though they had been unsuccessful in even getting sight of the enemy, and they kept up the chase for fifteen minutes, at least, after which they paused and listened, for the purpose of trying to locate the fugitives by the noise they might make in running.

They could not hear a sound, however. The "Liberty Boys" were too smart for their enemies; they had gotten quite a ways ahead and were now making a half circuit, and would soon be behind the redcoats.

They succeeded in doing this, and were not long in getting back to the cabin. Having full confidence in his scouts, Dick and his "Liberty Boys" again lay down and were soon asleep; nor were they disturbed again that night.

The fact of the matter was that this attack disconcerted the redcoats greatly and threw them entirely off the scent.

They kept up the search for the "Liberty Boys" nearly the whole night, but finally gave up in despair and set out for Camden, which point they reached just at daylight.

The redcoats were weary and disheartened and threw themselves down for a brief sleep and rest. Major Marsh slept two hours and then got up, ate his breakfast and made his way to headquarters.

General Cornwallis had just finished his breakfast and when he saw who his visitor was an exclamation escaped him.

"You here, major!" he cried. "Then you succeeded in running those 'Liberty Boys' down and wiping them out, after all?"

The major shook his head. "No, I am sorry to say that we did not succeed in doing so, General Cornwallis," he said.

"What! You mean to say that you have returned without accomplishing your purpose?"

"That is what I mean to say, sir."

"Why did you do it?"

"Well, I'll tell you. I got tired of having those 'Liberty Boys' find us without our being able to find them in return."

"What do you mean?"

Major Marsh explained in detail. He told General Cornwallis how his men had been attacked a number of times, and how they had been unable to get sight of the enemy.

"We put in nearly the whole night looking for them," he said; "and not being able to find them I thought that we might as well return."

General Cornwallis was silent for several minutes, during which time he gazed at the floor, a deep frown wrinkling his forehead. "This has been a bad night's work!" he said presently.

"So it has," admitted Major Marsh, though with rather a reluctant air.

"That was a terrible affair—the explosion."

"Yes, indeed!"

"That must have been a secret storehouse for powder for the rebels of this vicinity."

"I judge you are right about that."

"I am sure of it. There must be a nest of Whigs and rebels up in the vicinity of that house."

"It would seem likely."

"Yes; the fact that the 'Liberty Boys' are there proves it, too."

"Yes."

"Well, the question now is, what shall we do? Shall we give up and acknowledge ourselves beaten by this little band of impudent rebels, or shall we make another effort to wipe them off the face of the earth?"

Major Marsh shook his head. "I hardly know," he replied. "It goes against the grain to give up, but I can tell you what it is, that is a dangerous gang to go against! It is just like the Dutchman's flea; when you think you have your finger on it it isn't there, but comes up and strikes you in the back."

"I know the 'Liberty Boys' of old," said the general; "they are dangerous fellows, there isn't any doubt regarding that, but I should think it would be possible to get at them."

"There is only one way to do it with any degree of safety," said the major slowly.

"And that?"

"Is by hunting for them only in the daytime when it is possible to see them if they try to slip up on us."

General Cornwallis nodded. "That is the way to do, undoubtedly," he said. "Well, do you wish to have the command of the party that makes the attempt?"

The major nodded. "Yes, I do!" he said, decidedly. "I would give a good deal to get a chance to square accounts with that Dick Slater!"

"All right, major; I will leave the management of the affair to you and I hope that you will succeed better than you have so far."

"I will do my best, and if I fail it will be through no fault of mine."

"I am sure of that; and I will say that while the recent expedition resulted disastrously, I do not think it was through mismanagement or fault of yours."

"Thank you; no, sir, I will say that I do not think any one would have been able to do any better than I did."

The major saluted and took his departure from headquarters. He went to work at once and selected one hundred men whom he knew to be as brave as lions, and when this was done he told them what he intended doing.

"We are going to make another attempt to kill or scatter that band of 'Liberty Boys,'" he said; "I am going to take only one hundred men—which is the same number as is in the band of rebels we are going after—and I think we will be able to do better than when we had so many men. We can move much more rapidly and with speed and ease, and we will search for the enemy in the daytime and keep a double line of sentinels on guard at night. I believe we will be able to make a success of it. What do you think?"

The men said they thought so. They were willing to make the attempt, at any rate, and soon the party set out. It marched to the place where the Morgan house had stood, and where was now a scene of desolation. The redcoats paused here for a few minutes to take a look at the ruins and then moved onward, up the road.

"We will stop at the first house and ask if they have seen anything of the 'Liberty Boys,'" said Major Marsh.

"If the people happen to be Whigs they would not tell us, even if they knew where the rebel band was," said an under-officer.

"That is true," was the reply; "they may be loyal people, however, and if such is the case and they have seen anything of the band of 'Liberty Boys,' they will tell us."

"True; I hope they will prove to be loyal people."

Half a mile farther on they came to a farmhouse. Here they halted and Major Marsh entered the yard and advanced to the front door. He knocked, and a few moments later the door was opened by a tall, sallow-faced woman, dowdily dressed and with frowsy hair.

"Good morning, my good woman!" said the major. "I wish to ask you a few questions."

"All right, sir," was the reply; "I'll answer 'em ef I kin."

"Very well. First, then, are you loyal to the king?"

The woman nodded vigorously. "Yes, sir, I am," she replied; "me an' my old man are both loyal to the king."

"I'm glad to hear that. How about the neighbors? Are many of them loyal like yourself?"

The woman shook her head. "Not very many uv 'em aroun' here," was the reply; "most uv 'em air rebels uv the worst kind."

"Humph! I understood that there were quite a good many rebels in this part of the country."

"Yas, thar's lots uv 'em."

"Well, I wish to ask you: Have you seen a party of young men, about one hundred in number, around here this morning?"

The woman shook her head. "No, I hain't seen no sech party uv men," she replied.

The major was disappointed. "Well, good morning," he said, after a moment of irresolution.

"Good mornin'."

The officer went back out to the road and reported that he had been unable to secure any information. "The woman has seen nothing of the 'Liberty Boys,'" he said.

"What will we do, major?" asked the under-officer.

"I suppose that we shall just have to keep on looking for the scoundrels."

"Here comes the woman; perhaps she is about to give us some information, after all."

The woman had left the house and was approaching the gate.

"I'll tell ye sumthin'," she said as she reached the gate, "ha'f er mile up ther road lives Simon Kent's folks. They air ther wust rebels in these parts, an' thar hain't no doubt thet they c'u'd giv' ye informashun ef they wanted ter. I think thet ef ye'll keep watch uv theer place you'll see ther rebel band ye air lookin' fur afore very long."

"Thank you," said the major; "we will act upon your suggestion."

Then the party moved on up the road, and ten minutes later came to the house in question. The major entered the yard and approached the front door of the house. He knocked, and the door was opened by a girl of perhaps seventeen years. She was a pretty girl, but looked somewhat frightened when she saw the major and his men. The officer doffed his hat and bowed, however, and smiled in his most engaging manner.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he said; "but will you kindly tell me if you have seen anything of a party of men anywhere around here this morning?"

The girl shook her head. "No, sir; I have seen nobody

"You and your men," was the reply, in a voice which trembled slightly in spite of her efforts to control it.

"You are sure?" the major eyed the girl searchingly.

She flushed. "Surely you do not think I would—would tell what was not true, sir?" There was anger in the girl's eyes, this time.

"Oh, no," the major hastened to say; "I just thought it possible that you might have forgotten, that is all."

"That would be impossible, sir. Do you think that if no one was to come along an hour hence and ask me if I had seen a party of soldiers this morning, that I would be forgotten in that short time that you were here?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Certainly not; and I have seen no other party of men this morning."

"Very well, miss; I beg your pardon, if I have said anything that did not please you."

The girl bowed coldly, and the major went out to the stable and rejoined his men.

"That girl is a rebel, I'll wager," he said; "she is smart, whip, and a bit saucy."

"Has she seen any of the 'Liberty Boys,' major?"

She said not."

"Do you believe her?"

"I hardly know. She seemed to be telling the truth."

"Yet she may not have been."

"You are right; well, I'll tell you what I think of doing: I'll leave half a dozen of you boys near here and you will keep watch of this house. Then, if you see the 'Liberty Boys,' you can send me word and I will come back and fight them a fight."

The party moved on up the road and was soon out of sight of the house. When perhaps a quarter of a mile distant the party came to a stop and the major named six men and instructed them to slip around to the rear of the farmhouse and secrete themselves and keep watch for the "Liberty Boys."

"We will continue on up the road in this direction, a mile distant, and then we will make a circuit and come back and see you," he said; "and if the 'Liberty Boys' should show themselves, send word to me."

The men said they would, and started to do as instructed. They went up a circuitous route, through the timber, and were soon in the timber back of the Kent home. They guessed that their movements had not been seen by any one, but in this they were mistaken. As soon as the party of redcoats had left the place and moved on up the road the girl had hastened through the house and out at the back door, and entering the timber she had hastened for-

ward till she came in sight of the party. When it stopped she was not seventy-five yards distant, and she watched the proceedings with interest.

When the six men separated from the rest and sneaked away through the timber the girl nodded her head. "I suspected they would be up to some trick or other," she murmured, under her breath; "well, I will just see where those men are going, and what they are going to do."

The girl followed the six and kept them in sight, and when they paused just within the edge of the timber, back of the stable, she was not far distant, but concealed behind a tree. She watched the redcoats closely, and presently saw them steal forward and approach the stable.

"What are they going to do, I wonder?" the girl asked herself. "Are they going to steal our horses?"

There was a window at the rear of the stable, and the redcoats crawled through this and disappeared from the girl's view. She left her hiding place, and, stealing forward to the stable, peered through between two boards.

The redcoats were climbing up into the haymow. In fact, four of them were already there and the other two quickly disappeared through the opening in the floor of the haymow.

"Now, I wonder what that means?" the girl asked herself. "Why have they climbed up into the haymow?" Then the thought came to her that the men had secured this position in order to keep watch of the house.

"That's it!" she said to herself. "That British officer asked if I had seen any large party of men around here, and seemed to doubt my word when I told him that I had not. He has sent these men here to keep watch, and if the party he was looking for should come, the spies would go and report the fact."

The girl stole away from the stable, and entering the timber made her way by a circuitous route to the front of the house. Entering, she addressed a woman who was at work in the kitchen.

"Mother," the girl said, "there are six redcoats concealed in our haymow!"

The woman started and almost dropped a dish that she was washing. "What is that you say, Mamie?" she exclaimed. "Six redcoats in our haymow!"

"Yes, mother."

"How do you know?"

"I saw them enter the stable."

"You saw them enter the stable?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Just now; I have just come from there."

"Oh, how did you happen to see them?"

"I followed the main force that was here a little while ago, mother; I suspected that they might try some kind of a trick, and I saw the six men leave the main force and start back this way, through the timber. I followed them, and saw them enter our stable."

"Well, well!"

"I crept up close and looked through a crack and saw them climbing up into the haymow."

"Goodness, Mamie! You are venturesome!" the girl's mother exclaimed. "I would not have let you follow the redcoats if I had known where you were going."

"I knew that, mother; that is the reason I slipped away," with a smile.

"You should not have done it."

"But I'm glad I did, now; aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm glad, now."

"Yes, indeed; what if those redcoats were there and we did not know it. We might have gotten into trouble."

"So we might; but what shall we do? Why are they there, do you think?"

"Well, you see, mother, that officer asked if I had seen a body of men, and I have no doubt he had reference to those young men, the 'Liberty Boys,' who struck the British such severe blows yesterday afternoon and last night."

"Of course, that is who the British are looking for."

"And they have in some way learned that we are patriots, and the officer detailed these men to watch our house, thinking that the 'Liberty Boys' will come here."

"Likely you are right."

"I am sure of it. My! I wish I knew where the 'Liberty Boys' are; I would go and tell them about the six redcoats who are in our haymow, and they could come and capture them."

"I wish you knew; I shall feel uneasy as long as those men are there. When your father comes in from the field at noon he will go up into the haymow to put down hay for the horses, and I am afraid he may get into trouble with the redcoats and even lose his life—for he hates the sight of a redcoat, and may talk to them in such a fashion as to anger them."

Mamie looked sober. "True," she replied; and then a little cry of delight escaped her as she glanced out through the front door.

"What is it, Mamie?"

"There comes George Martin! He may know where the 'Liberty Boys' are; and, if so, I may be able to get him to take the news of the presence here of the redcoats to Dick Slater."

"I hope so. Is he coming to the house?"

"Yes; he's almost to the door."

The girl hastened to the front door and greeted George Martin cordially. "I'm glad to see you, George," she said frankly; "I wish to ask you if you know where the 'Liberty Boys' are?"

"Yes, I know where they are," he replied. "Why?"

Then Mamie told him about the six redcoats who were in the haymow of the stable. "I thought the 'Liberty Boys' might come and capture them," she added, in conclusion.

"And that is just what they will do, Mamie!" George exclaimed. "And they will go after the main body of redcoats, too. You say it went on toward the north?"

"Yes; but it will come back this way again, likely."

"I have no doubt that you are right; well, you must just rest easy. I will go at once to where the 'Liberty Boys' are, and tell Dick Slater about this, and they will be back here in less than no time."

"Where are they, George? You know we are patriots, so need not be afraid to tell us."

"You know the old cabin over on the bank of the tawba—where we camped out when we went on the fishing excursion last summer, Mamie?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is the place where the 'Liberty Boys' are."

"And where are Mrs. Morgan and Lottie?"

"They are there."

"That isn't so very far from here."

"No; only a little more than a mile."

"Well, hurry, George, and go and tell Dick Slater that the redcoats are here," said Mrs. Kent; "I am afraid they may kill Mr. Kent when he comes home from work in the field."

"All right; I will hurry, Mrs. Kent. We will be back here in an hour or so and will make those redcoats pay for the trouble they had stayed out of your hayloft."

George bade them good-by, and hastened away. He was careful to go back to the road in such a way as to keep out of sight of the house between himself and the stable so as to keep the redcoats from seeing him if possible. There was a tree on the opposite side of the road and he entered this timber breathing a sigh of relief as he did so.

"There; now the redcoats can't see me," he said to himself; "and I will not let any grass grow under my feet while I am on my way to the cabin."

He hastened onward, through the timber, and fifteen minutes later was at the cabin.

"Hello, George!" greeted Dick Slater. "What is the news?"

"I know where there are some redcoats, Dick!" the youth exclaimed, eagerly.

"You do?" with an air of interest. The other "Liberty Boys" listened eagerly also.

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"In a haymow at the home of Mr. Kent."

"Who is Mr. Kent?" asked Dick.

"He is one of our neighbors, and a strong patriot," said Mrs. Morgan, who, with Lottie, had come out of the cabin when George put in an appearance.

"How far does he live from here?"

"Only about a mile," replied George.

"How many redcoats are there in the haymow, and what are they doing there?"

George hastened to explain.

"So they are watching for us, eh?" remarked Dick.

"Well, I guess we shall have to let them see us—but we won't let them see us until after we are ready for them to do so. That will be when we are climbing up into the haymow and calling on them to surrender."

"That is the talk, Dick!" cried Bob Estabrook. "And when, when we have captured those fellows we will go after the main gang."

"We will remain in the vicinity of the Kent home and let it for them to put in an appearance," said Dick; "and when we can go for them rough-shod."

"Yes, that will be all right," agreed Mark Morrison. "When shall we start?"

"At once; the quicker, the better. We must get there and capture the redcoats before Mr. Kent comes from the field, as they might, as Mrs. Kent fears, kill him. Then, we must get through with them before the main force comes back."

"True."

Dick gave the order for the youths to get ready, and they instantly began making preparations. It took them but a few minutes, and then, leaving George Martin and three of the "Liberty Boys" behind to look after the safety of Mrs. Morgan and Lottie, the others set out.

It did not take them long to reach the vicinity of the Kent home. They approached the stable from the rear, and, like the redcoats, climbed in through the rear window. They were careful to make as little noise as possible, and indeed they made scarcely any noise at all. As they approached the ladder leading to the loft the faint murmur of voices came to their ears, and it was evident that the

redcoats were playing cards, and had no suspicion that they were in danger.

Dick began climbing the ladder, the others following as closely as was possible, and five of the youths had got up into the loft before the British soldiers became aware of their presence so busily engaged were they in playing cards and looking out through cracks in the side of the loft toward the house.

The redcoats had supposed that their presence in the haymow was not known, and were taken by surprise when the "Liberty Boys" suddenly appeared. They showed fight, but when two had gone down the rest surrendered.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIVELY TIMES.

The redcoats had seen that the stable was full of youths, and realized that it would be impossible for them to escape, hence their giving up so easily.

"Well, my friends, we rather took you by surprise that time, didn't we?" remarked Dick.

"Yes," growled one of the prisoners, "but our comrades will——"

He caught himself as one of the others gave him a warning kick.

Dick noted this and laughed. "Never mind," he said, "we know all about your comrades, and how they have gone farther north in search of us. You can't give us any information we do not already possess."

The redcoats looked at one another in dismay. "Who told you about it?" one asked.

"No matter; we know what is going on in this vicinity, you may be sure; and when your comrades come back this way we are going to go for them rough-shod."

Dick and his comrades now bound the legs of the prisoners as well as their arms, and gagged the fellows. "You see, we don't want you to be in a position to give warning to your comrades when they come back this way," said Dick. Then, leaving the six men lying in the loft, the "Liberty Boys" went down the ladder and out of the stable. Mrs. Kent and Mamie came out to greet the youths.

"Have you captured them?" asked Mrs. Kent anxiously.

"Yes, madam," replied Dick; "they are bound, hand and foot and gagged, and we are now going to lay in wait for the main party of redcoats, and when they come we will give them a warm reception."

"You will have to be very careful," said Mamie; "there are a hundred of them at the very least."

"We will be careful," replied Dick. Then he sent out scouts to keep watch for the return of the party of British.

The youths remained at the home of the Kents till noon, and when Mr. Kent came in from his work he was surprised. He was delighted when he learned that six redcoats had been captured in his hayloft.

"It was lucky for me—and possibly for some of them—that you captured them," he said, quietly, "for had I come home and found them up there when I went to throw down some hay for my horses, there would have been a fight."

"It would have resulted in your death, likely," said Dick.

"Perhaps so."

Mrs. Kent and Mamie had been busy for an hour past and had cooked enough for the "Liberty Boys," who were invited to remain and take dinner there. Dick consented, and they ate dinner.

They had just finished when the sound of musket shots came to their hearing. It came from the direction of the cabin on the bank of the river, and the youths became alarmed at once.

"Can it be that the redcoats have discovered the cabin?" cried Dick.

"The firing came from there, I am sure!" said Bob Estabrook.

"Let us hasten back there and see what is going on!" cried Tom Morgan, who was anxious regarding the safety of his mother and sister.

"Very well," said Dick, who was himself somewhat anxious; and he gave the order for the "Liberty Boys" to move. They obeyed and were soon hastening in the direction of the old cabin.

Let us see what had taken place at the cabin. As we know, George Martin and three of the "Liberty Boys" had remained at the cabin to look after the safety of Mrs. Morgan and Lottie. George and Lottie went away for a short walk, but did not stay away long, for they feared there might be danger if they did so as some of the redcoats might be nosing around in the timber. Two hours passed and they wondered if their comrades had captured the redcoats in the haymow at the Kent home. They had not heard the sound of firearms, but that did not prove anything, as they might not have to fire any in capturing only six men.

About eleven o'clock Mrs. Morgan and Lottie got dinner, and all sat down and ate. By twelve o'clock they had finished and the women folks had washed the dishes. Sam Sanderson, who happened to be one of the "Liberty Boys"

who had been left at the cabin, made a tour in the vicinity of the cabin, keeping his eyes open for redcoats, and to his surprise and consternation he saw the entire body of at least one hundred British soldiers coming through the timber.

"Great guns!" exclaimed Sam to himself, "there comes the entire gang! Dick and the boys have missed them in some manner, and the chances are that the scoundrels will discover the cabin. I must get back and warn them at rest."

He hastened back toward the cabin, but one of the redcoats, sharper eyed than his companions, caught sight of the youth and called the attention of the rest to him.

They at once set out in chase and pursued Sam with all their might. They were unable to gain on him, however, and were so far away as to make it a matter of doubt whether or not the muskets would carry that distance. When they saw they could not gain on the fugitive, however, they discharged a number of the muskets, in the hope that they might bring the fugitive down.

It was this firing that was heard by Dick and his "Liberty Boys." Sam was not hit and ran faster than ever. "There is no use talking," he said to himself, "we will have to get away from the cabin in a hurry. But where will we go? The redcoats will catch us sure, for the women folks can't run very fast."

Then a thought struck him: "The boat!" he thought. "It will hold four, and two can go with Mrs. Morgan and Lottie, and two of us will stay on this side and take our chances of escaping from the redcoats. If the four can get across the river without being killed by the redcoats' bullets they will be safe, for the river is a barrier that will stop the enemy."

When Sam reached the cabin he found that the three youths and the woman and girl had been alarmed by the firing, and were ready for flight. George Martin had thought of the boat, and they were down beside it, ready to get in, when Sam put in an appearance.

"Into the boat and away as quickly as possible!" cried Sam. "George, you and Dave go with the ladies, while Frank and I will take our chances on this side. Hasten!"

Sam assisted the ladies to enter the boat and George and Dave leaped in and seized the paddles. Sam pushed the boat off and telling the two youths to paddle with all their might, turned to Frank and said: "Come, old man, we must get out of this in a hurry!"

The two leaped away, running along the bank of the river, and going in the opposite direction from the place where the redcoats would come from. They had gone but a short

distance, however, before they received proof that the enemy was close at hand. There was the crack! crack! crack! of muskets, and the bullets flew all around the fugitives.

Their good fortune stayed by them, and although slightly wounded neither was disabled so as to impede their flight. They sheltered themselves as well as they could by keeping behind trees and ran with all their might.

A part of the British force came after them, while the other portion ran down to the river bank and began firing at the occupants of the boat.

"You cowardly scoundrels! don't you see there are ladies in this boat?" called out George Martin, angrily. "What do you, anyway—barbarians and fiends?"

"Stop the boat and come back, then!" cried the leader of the redcoats. "If you don't we shall keep on firing, and if we hurt the women it will be your fault, not ours!"

But George and his companion kept on paddling for dear life. They felt that they would rather take the chances of coming back and surrender; and Mrs. Morgan and Lottie encouraged them to keep on going.

"Never mind us," said Mrs. Morgan; "let them keep on shooting if they like. We would rather be shot than to surrender and become their prisoners."

"Yes, indeed!" said Lottie.

So the youths kept at it and succeeded in getting out of the boat before any of their number were wounded. They could not breathe freely, however, until they had reached the other bank of the river and had disembarked.

Then George Martin shook his fist at the redcoats, defiantly, and cried out: "There, you scoundrels! You can't catch us after all, did you?"

Probably the redcoats did not understand the youth's words, but they understood his action and a wild yell of defiance went up from them.

"Oh, yell!" murmured Dave Marion, the "Liberty Boy." "That's all the good it will do you!" Then he added, in a sober voice: "I wonder if Sam and Frank escaped?"

"I hope so!" said Mrs. Morgan.

"And so do I!" from Lottie.

The youths expressed themselves in like terms, and then Lottie asked: "Do you suppose the redcoats can get across the river?"

George shook his head. "Not unless they are willing to be shot," he replied. "There is no ford, nor any boats anywhere near here."

Meanwhile how was it faring with Sam Sanderson and Dick Ferris? They were splendid runners, and not hav-

ing been seriously wounded were enabled to gradually draw away from their pursuers. The redcoats kept up the chase, but soon realized that they did not stand much chance of catching the fugitives.

They kept on firing shots from pistols and yelling to the youths to stop and surrender, but they might as well have saved their lead and breath for the youths did not stop. Indeed, they seemed to increase their speed and drew away from the redcoats more rapidly, but this was because the pursuers, not being used to such violent exercise, were becoming tired and their speed was slackening.

At last the fugitives disappeared from sight and the redcoats stopped and turned back. They rejoined the other part of the force at the cabin and then each section of the force condoled with the other on their non-success in capturing the fugitives. While they were talking one of their scouts came running up.

"The 'Liberty Boys' are coming!" he cried. "The 'Liberty Boys' are coming!"

"Where are they?" cried Major Marsh, eagerly.

"A quarter of a mile away, in the timber."

"Is it the entire force?"

"Yes—one hundred strong, at least!"

"Did they see you?"

"I don't know; ordinarily I should say that they did not; but those 'Liberty Boys' have sharp eyes, and I would not like to say positively that they didn't see me."

"Well, if they are coming this way they will soon be here, so we had better get ready for a fight."

The major gave orders, and his men took up the best positions they could find. Many of them took shelter behind the cabin, while the majority lay down behind the sloping bank, which would furnish them with ready-made earthworks. Others took refuge behind trees.

Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" had seen the British scout. They saw him stealing away among the trees and knew that their coming would be known to the main force of redcoats soon.

"So be it," said Dick; "it will be a fight on almost even terms, as we have about an equal number of men."

"We will have the advantage of them, Dick," said Bob Estabrook. "We are more skilled in woodcraft than they, and can protect ourselves from injury better than they can."

"That is true; and I am glad of it, for I don't want to lose any of you boys, if I can help it. We have been together a long time, and have been remarkably fortunate, and I hope our good fortune will continue."

"So do I," said Bob. "Well, what is the programme?"

"We will advance slowly and cautiously, protecting ourselves behind trees, and when we get close enough we will engage the redcoats in battle and will try and teach them a few tricks about the Indian mode of warfare which they have not yet learned."

The order was given and the party advanced. The youths moved slowly, and protected themselves behind the tree. They could be reckless enough when there was need and they could be excessively cautious when there was occasion for it.

In this instance there was need of it. The redcoats were securely disposed, as we have seen, and had the "Liberty Boys" advanced openly they would have suffered the loss of many men. As it was they were reasonably safe, though the redcoats, catching occasional glimpses of the youths, began firing. They were not expert marksmen, as were the "Liberty Boys," however, and although one or two of the youths were wounded, none were killed or even seriously injured.

When within about fifty yards of the cabin the "Liberty Boys" came to a stop, and began keeping a sharp lookout for the redcoats. Every once in a while they would catch a glimpse of one of the members of the opposing force and two or three muskets would speak, usually with bad results for the venturesome redcoat.

It did not take Major Marsh long to learn that in this mode of warfare his men were not the equals of the "Liberty Boys," and he began trying to think up some other plan. He thought of making a charge, but reflected that they would be exposed to volleys from the weapons of the enemy, and knowing the youths were dead shots he did not care to expose his men to almost sure death.

He hardly knew what to do. This was not turning out the way he had expected, at all. He had hoped the "Liberty Boys" would walk blindly up and permit themselves to be shot down, but they were so unaccommodating as to not do anything of the kind, and now the British commander was puzzled and did not know what action to take.

Meanwhile Dick had sized up the situation. He realized that if a portion of his force could get around toward the rear of the redcoats they would have a good chance at them, and he detailed fifty of the youths, under command of Bob, to do this. So perfect was Dick's system of signals, by means of gestures and whistles, that he told the youths what he wished them to do without having to say a word. He simply attracted Bob's attention, and lifting both hands in the air five times, with fingers and thumbs held vertically, gave utterance to a peculiar whistle, which told Bob as plainly as words could have done that he was

to take fifty men and go around and make an attack from the rear.

Bob selected his men and the fifty were soon stealing away. So skilled were they that the redcoats did not detect what was going on, and the first they knew of what had taken place was when the youths opened fire on them from nearly behind them.

The redcoats were taken entirely by surprise, and before they could make up their minds what to do a dozen at least of their men had been killed.

Feeling that it would be folly to try to contend with the "Liberty Boys" in a style of warfare with which they were not familiar, the redcoats were ready to get away; and when Major Marsh gave the command to retreat, they were prompt to obey. They ran with all possible speed and a number were shot down before they could get out of range.

"Oh, come back and fight!" called out Dick. "I wouldn't have believed that soldiers of the king could be such cowards!"

The taunt angered them, but the British did not come back. They knew it would not be healthy for them to do so; so they kept right on going.

A sudden thought came to Major Marsh. He remembered that he had left six men on guard over the Kenton farmhouse, and he decided that he would return to that place and burn the house, out of spite, so he gave the order and the force set out in that direction.

They reached the farmhouse after a walk of fifteen minutes, and gave Mrs. Kent and Mamie a great scare, they were not expecting to see the redcoats.

"Out of the house if you don't wish to be burned to death, woman!" cried Major Marsh, who was now in an angry mood. "We are going to burn the house down!"

"Oh, sir, please do not do that!" pleaded the woman.

"It will do no good to plead. Come out of the house at once!"

"We had better obey, mother," said Mamie; "he means to burn the house, I am sure."

"You are right!" savagely. "You are rebels, and I am going to have revenge on somebody for the way my men have been treated by those scoundrelly 'Liberty Boys'!"

The major had sent some of his men to search for the six whom he had left on guard over the house, and presently there came a shout from the stable.

"Here they are, major!" was the cry. "They are in the haymow, and are bound hand and foot and gagged!"

A curse escaped the lips of the officer. "More of the work of those 'Liberty Boys'!" he grated, striding toward

stable. "Oh, how I would like to get a good chance at gang!"

he six soldiers had been freed from their bonds by the the major reached the stable, and came down and out.

What does this mean? How came you to be prisoners the hayloft of the stable?" the officer cried.

We were surprised and captured by the 'Liberty Boys.' " the reply.

I suspected as much. Were they all here?"

"Yes, the whole gang."

Humph! It is as I suspected; these people are rebels, I am going to make an example of them. Come, men, we will burn the house down!"

He led the way back to the house and ordered some of men to pile some brush against the side of the kitchen.

When this had been done he ordered that the brush be in fire. Just as one of the men got down on his knees began trying to start the fire with a flint and steel,

there came the cry, in a clear, ringing voice:

Quick! Mrs. Kent and Mamie—get out of the way we will give the redcoats a volley! Run—run out to inside!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE REDCOATS AGAIN WORSTED.

The redcoats whirled and looked behind them—to see "Liberty Boys" standing in the vicinity of the stable leveled muskets in their hands!

Mrs. Kent and Mamie had presence of mind sufficient to obey the instructions given them by Dick Slater, and ran out to one side as quickly as possible.

The instant they were out of range, crash! roar! went a hundred muskets and a score of the redcoats went

Then on the air rose the ringing command by Dick Slater: "Charge, 'Liberty Boys'! Charge, and fire any go!"

The youths obeyed, and dashed forward with loud and fog cheers, giving utterance to their battle-cry of respite with the king! Long live Liberty!"

They fired two volleys from their pistols as they came, and the redcoats were so demoralized that, although they did not fire a volley, their bullets did no damage to speak of, and the next instant the "Liberty Boys" were among them, cutting right and left, and laying about them with muskets clubbed—which were most effective weapons in the quarters.

It was a short, fierce encounter. The "Liberty Boys" had all the best of it. They were terrors in a hand-to-hand fight like this, as the redcoats quickly found, and presently when the men saw their commander go down, under a blow over the head from a musket butt, they took refuge in flight.

Dick and the youths pursued the fleeing enemy a short distance and then stopped and came back. They took a survey of the battlefield. They counted fifty-four bodies of the redcoats, and out of these about forty were dead, the others being down, senseless as a result of blows from the butts of the muskets.

Major Marsh was one of the first of these to regain consciousness, and when he rose to a sitting posture and looked about him, a groan escaped his lips.

"Well, major, what do you think about it now?" asked Dick, quietly.

The major felt of his head and groaned again, and then said: "I have nothing to say—save that I think you fellows are demons! I don't think you can be killed!"

"Oh, we are human, the same as yourself, major; but we are careful not to expose ourselves, that is all. We prefer to kill the enemy by letting the enemy kill us."

"Well, you certainly make a success of what you try to do!"

"We try to do so," with a modest tone and air.

"What are you going to do with me?" the major asked.

Dick was silent a few moments, during which time he glanced around over the scene and then he looked again at the officer and said: "I'll tell you what I will do, major: I don't wish to take any prisoners. They would be in my way. I don't wish to have the care of them. I think that I shall let you go free; all that I shall require is that you will bury your dead and get your wounded away from here at the earliest possible moment."

"I shall be only too glad to accept your proposition," was the reply. Some of the redcoats had come to, by this time, and the major ordered one to go to Camden and bring a couple of ambulances. Dick told him to get a horse out of the stable, as he could make a much quicker trip, and he obeyed and soon dashed away in the direction of Camden.

He was back again an hour and a half later, and during the interval the major and such of his men as were able to work, and assisted to some extent by the "Liberty Boys," had buried their dead comrades. Now the wounded men were placed in the wagons and the redcoats took their departure.

"Well, what do you think about it, Dick—will they have another try at us, do you suppose?"

"I hardly know, Bob. If they do we will try and make it interesting for them."

Bob grinned. "We have certainly succeeded in doing so, so far," he said; "we have gone for them rough-shod, and have done them a lot of damage."

When Major Marsh and his men arrived at Camden there was great excitement. The entire garrison was agog with interest and wonder. What sort of fellows were those "Liberty Boys"? was the question they asked themselves. The youths certainly seemed to be invincible, and the British hardly knew what to think.

Of course, the major went at once to headquarters and reported to General Cornwallis, who paced the floor like a caged tiger and uttered exclamations of anger.

"Well, well! This beats anything I ever heard of!" the general cried when the major had finished. "It seems that those 'Liberty Boys' are invincible."

"So it does," was the disconsolate reply; "at any rate, I freely acknowledge that I am not equal to the task of capturing them or driving them out of the country."

"Nevertheless it must be done!" cried Cornwallis. "It will never do to have it said that a band of one hundred youngsters was able to successfully defy the entire British army of the South!"

"That would be rather a bitter pill to have to swallow," the major agreed.

"Yes; and I do not intend to swallow it. I am going to capture Dick Slater and those 'Liberty Boys,' or drive them out of the country, even if I have to take the field against them in person!"

But the general did not do so. Something came up to attract his attention in another direction. While he and the major were talking a messenger came and entered the room where they were. He had come from North Carolina, away beyond the Great Pedee, and brought the news that General Gates and a large force of patriots was coming southward with the avowed intention of giving battle to the British army at Camden.

"General Gates, you say?" remarked the general when the messenger had finished.

"Yes, sir."

"And how large a force has he, do you think?"

"About three thousand men."

"So many as that?"

"Yes."

"Jove! that is a third more men than we have!"

"Yes, but the probabilities are that the majority of the are militiamen," said Major Marsh; "and in that case the number does not mean so much as it might."

"You are right about that," said the messenger; "more than two-thirds of Gates' force are militiamen."

"While our men are all veterans, trained fighters," said Cornwallis, "it is good! We shall be able to give Gates a warm reception, without a doubt."

The fact that the patriot army was coming, turned General Cornwallis' attention away from the "Liberty Boys," however, and he dismissed Major Marsh with a statement that for the present he would not do anything in the way of trying to get at the daring band of youths.

"This other business is of more importance," he said, "and I shall have to consult with Lord Rawdon and be in readiness to give battle to the rebels."

He sent for Lord Rawdon at once and also for the other officers of his staff, and they held a council of war. They discussed the matter from all standpoints, and finally decided upon a plan of action.

As soon as the redcoats under Major Marsh had had their departure, with their wounded comrades in the balances, Dick sent a couple of the "Liberty Boys," Tom Morgan to the cabin on the river bank to let George Martin and his comrade and Mrs. Morgan and Lottie know that it would be safe to come back across the river.

When they appeared and waved their hats, George and Dave saw them and the four got into the boat and rowed back across the river.

"What has become of the redcoats?" asked George Martin, eagerly, as they were getting out of the boat.

"We gave them the worst kind of a licking," said Tom Morgan, "and what was left of them have gone back to Camden."

"Hurrah! I'm glad of that!"

"And so am I!" declared Lottie. "Goodness! I wish I could have been with you and helped fight the British."

"We didn't need any help," smiled Tom. "We went for them rough-shod, and they were the worst thrashed fellows you ever heard of. We killed forty of them and wounded a number."

It was decided that Mrs. Morgan and Lottie should go to the home of the Kents for the present, and the "Liberty Boys" would remain there on guard to keep the boat from doing any damage, and the little party would stay out. It did not take long to reach the Kent home. Mrs. Morgan and Lottie were welcomed by Mrs. Kent and Mamie.

The "Liberty Boys" went into camp near by and Dick sent out scouts so as to make sure that his men would not be surprised; and he was careful to send them in every direction, as the enemy might try to approach from a different direction from that in which they might be expected to come.

The day passed by and night came, and no sign of redcoats had been seen. It was the same that night and the next day, and Dick began to wonder why the British had not made an attempt to get even with his "Liberty Boys" for the severe manner in which they had handled the parties that had been sent out.

The next day he learned the reason. A scout who had come on in advance of the patriot army was encountered by one of Dick's scouts at a point three miles north of Kent home, and he told Dick's man that Gates and the patriot army would be along in about a day and a half. The scout came in and told Dick, and he shrewdly surmised that the British at Camden had learned that the patriot army was coming, and that the reason they had made no further effort against his "Liberty Boys" was because they were busy getting ready to offer the patriots battle.

The news that the patriot army was coming filled the "Liberty Boys" with enthusiasm.

"Now we will be all right," said Bob Estabrook; "as soon as Gates gets here we will go in and give Cornwallis a thrashing as he never had before!"

"We will go at once and join Gates' army," said Dick; "we must be with him when the battle takes place."

"You are right," agreed Bob, and all the other "Liberty Boys" said the same.

"When will you go, Dick?" asked Tom Morgan.

"To-morrow morning, Tom."

"And may I go with you?"

"Why, certainly, if you wish, Tom."

"Well, I do wish to go. I am not yet satisfied. I want to pay the account with the British for the part they took in causing the death of my father."

"Well, I shall be glad to have you go with us, and I have no doubt that you will be able to even up matters with the British before we get through with the affair."

"That will suit me, first-rate."

Dick told his mother and sister that he was going to go with the "Liberty Boys" and then called Mamie, who was his sweetheart, and told her the same. She hesitated at first, but finally gave in on Tom's promising that he would come back as soon as the battle was over.

"Oh, I'll do that, Mamie," he said; "I only want to

take part in one real battle and help thrash the redcoats; then I will be ready to come back home and settle down."

"See that you do it, Tom!"

"Do you think I would forget my promise to you?" with a look of reproach.

"Not if you love me like you say you do, Tom."

"Well, you know I do that!" was the reply, and then Tom took the girl in his arms and hugged and kissed her. "There," he said, "now I guess you don't have any doubts regarding the matter, do you?"

"No," replied the girl, with a flushed face and happy look in her eyes.

Tom went with the "Liberty Boys," and went through the unfortunate battle with the British without receiving a wound; and when the patriot army was split up and scattered to the four winds, he made his way back to his home and went to work.

"We got badly whipped," he said to Mamie, in a sorrowful tone, "but I did the best I could, and am confident that I killed a sufficient number of the redcoats to settle the score which I had against them."

The "Liberty Boys" fought desperately in the battle of Camden, but could not turn the tide of battle, and when the affair was ended they rode away in search of other chances for "Going for the Redcoats Rough-Shod."

THE END.

The next number (67) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' BATTLE FOR LIFE; OR, THE HARDEST STRUGGLE OF ALL," by Harry Moore.

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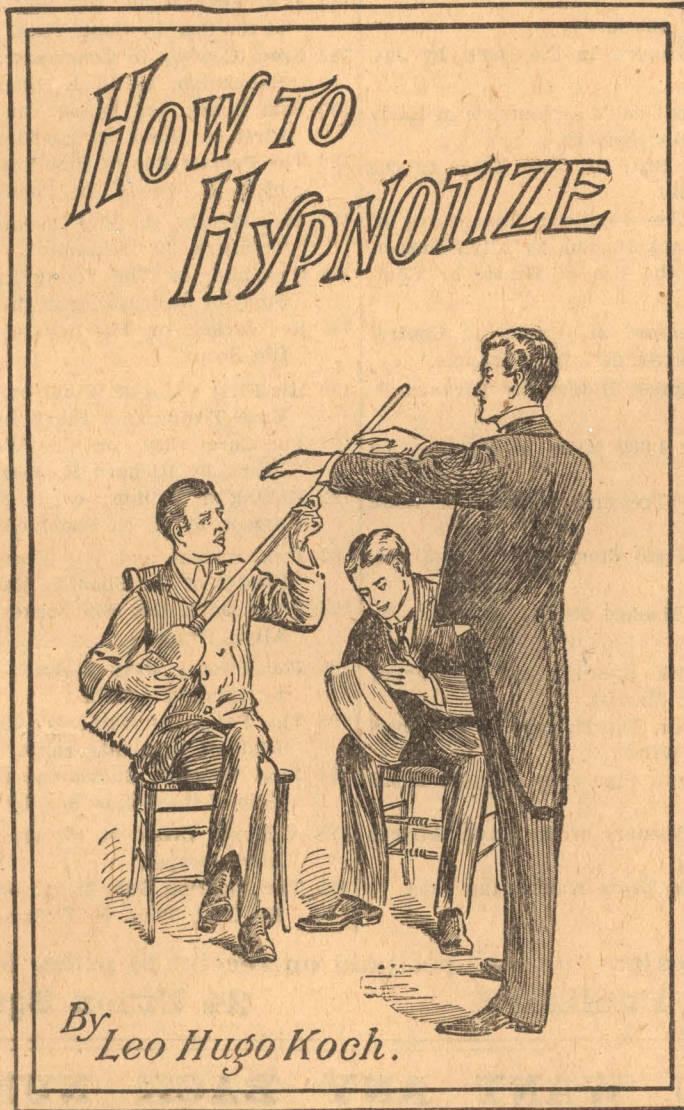
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